

Lausanne–Echallens–Bercher (LEB): new tunnel open

Services through the new tunnel between Union-Prilly and Lausanne-Chauderon were due to start on 15 May following completion of the five-year project to eliminate the final section of street running on the LEB in Lausanne (see *Swiss Express* 147, September 2021 p34).



One of the LEB's 2020-built Be 4/8 3-car Stadler units No.66 is seen on 25 February 2022 arriving at Echallens on a working from the temporary terminus at Lausanne (Prilly-Chasseur) that was used during the tunnel construction. It is on a short working to Echallens and the driver has already changed the train's information systems for the return journey. Photo: Sholto Thomas

RhB acquires new firefighting locomotives

Xm 2/4 No.27401 is the first of two new firefighting locomotives for the Rhätische Bahn's Vereina tunnel and is seen in the photograph below at Landquart shortly after delivery from Müller Technologie AG, Frauenfeld, on 22 February. A similar vehicle 27402 and two rescue vehicles (Xm 2/4 Nos.27403 and 27404) will be acquired in 2022. They are due to enter service in September. As the Vereina tunnel does not have a safety gallery, one fire-fighting vehicle and one rescue vehicle, with space for passengers, will be stationed at each portal. Note the Romansch for 'fire brigade', *Pumpiers*, on the side, similar to French *Pompiers*.



Photo: © Jürg D. Lüthard

RhB reports modest profit for 2021

Following state support for passenger services, on 5 April RhB was able to announce a modest profit for 2021 of CHF 711,000 (2020: loss CHF 22.2m). Revenue increased to CHF 390.4 m (2020: CHF 347.3 m) but passenger revenue remains 30% below 2019. According to the railway, "the financial situation remains tense and continues to require great attention". Their report specifically says they are worried about the potential effect of the crisis in Ukraine on travel behaviour.

Berner Oberland Bahn (BOB) orders new trains

On March 29 BOB placed an order with Stadler for six further three-section ABeh 4/8 units. There was no tender process on the grounds that Stadler is the only builder capable of fulfilling the specialist requirements of the order including multiple working with existing Stadler units on the line.

Between Interlaken and Wilderswil a new station is being built with a large park and ride facility. The hope is that visitors to Grindelwald and Lauterbrunnen will use this facility instead of driving up to the car parks in the two villages.

Jungfrau Railway Group achieves almost balanced result for 2021

The war in Ukraine was also referenced by the management of Jungfrau Bahnen in an announcement to the media on 7 April in which they confirmed that they almost reached break-even in 2021 with a loss of just CHF 200,000. Revenue of CHF 130.8 m was a slight improvement on 2020 but remains CHF 92.5 m below 2019.

Visitor numbers at Jungfraujoch remain 65% below 2019 levels. The railway reported the welcome reappearance of visitors from the USA and the Gulf States in the second half of 2021 but the total disappearance of the Asian travel market remains a concern.

Rigi Bahn: new Stadler trains now in service

An official inauguration of the new Stadler Bhe 4/6 trains Nos.41–46 took place with a press run on 7 April in advance of public services between Vitznau and Rigi Kulm the following day. The distinctively-designed new trains, very much an acquired taste in the view of many, have been given names of famous historic visitors to the summit of the mountain. The unit selected for the press run was No.45 *Queen Victoria*. Unfortunately, the Queen cannot have been amused that day as she failed with a door problem and the press had to transfer to No.44 *Mark Twain*.



Rigibahnen Bhe 4/6 No.45 *Queen Victoria* before the press run to Rigi Kulm at Vitznau on 7 April 2022. For the run itself, it had to be replaced by No.44 *Mark Twain*. Source: Rigibahn