



Climate change

G P Brown (*Railwatch* 124) throws some mud at the University of East Anglia's world-leading climate change scientists without offering any reasons for why we shouldn't trust these scientists.

I know a number personally, and have always found them to be impressive and highly intelligent people with a deep concern for the terrible damage that we are knowingly doing to our own and only planetary home, this Earth.

G P Brown finishes by asking "Why worry in any case? Isn't it about the time the hole in the ozone layer (remember that?) should have done for us all?"

Presumably, G P Brown is unaware that the reason the ozone hole has not done for us is because a worldwide agreement was put together which dealt with the main cause of the ozone hole, CFCs.

Now, we badly need a similar worldwide agreement to deal with the main cause of planetary over-heat, CO₂. A thriving public transport network could play a role in reigning in our addiction to oil, and thus in giving us a chance of surviving the terrible threat of global over-heat, a threat that outstrips even the earlier threat (which humanity successfully dealt with) of ozone-depletion.

All credit to *Railwatch* for helping us tackle this dire threat. All people of good conscience should become literate about the threat of climate disaster – and about how rail can play a role in tackling it.
Councillor Dr Rupert Read, Norwich Green Party, NR2 3TT, rupertread@fastmail.co.uk

Theory and practice

I have been doing a bit of research into the railway conversion claims of Transwatch, which is run by Paul Withrington and can be found on the internet and elsewhere. He claims "to deal only in facts". His website has a list of "fact sheets". Railfuture members should have fun cataloguing flaws. To start them off, here are a few examples:

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1. "City terminals would be converted to multi-storey terminals with 30 bus platforms per storey". "Every destination would be served direct by bus with no intermediate calls".

London's Waterloo and Euston stations are named as easy meat. Waterloo rail services go to about 200 destinations. If buses were to serve so many destinations, it would require a six-storey terminal. Would planning permission be granted? If the rail station was converted, the terminal sites would be out of use for about two years, and inundated with lorries and plant, causing even greater congestion. Euston would need a 20-storey terminal for buses to serve all its potential destinations direct!

2. "All rail freight has a road journey at each end of 10 miles."

This premise is used by Transwatch to calculate fuel consumption 'comparisons'. But 80% or more of rail freight is direct from port/colliery, etc to user.

3. "All single lines were built to double line widths". No source is given.

4. "Road traffic on converted railways would be as fast and as safe as on motorways." But how would the buses cope with the thousands of level crossings and flat junctions?

5. "All displaced rail passengers would transfer to buses." After every rail closure, most passengers transferred to cars.

6. "Buses would depart direct to one destination when full - there would be no need for timetables". Inevitably, buses to remote destinations would take hours to fill.

7. "Conversion (of 11,000 route miles) would be done in weeks by pre-dumping materials and plant every few miles on the lineside." This would affect private property, homes, farms and businesses, beside the line.

8. All railways (urban and rural, double and single) are

"compared" with motorways. This ignores 200,000 miles of other roads from which nearly all traffic originates and on which most transport operators have their depots.

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Calais-Dover ferries

Gavin Meeser pointed out (*Letters Railwatch* 124) that P&O's Calais-Dover ferries will still accept foot passengers. This is very helpful.

My report in *Railwatch* 123 was based on feedback from members and from Continental colleagues who wanted to come to our country by means other than air or Eurostar and had made enquiries about this and other operators.

Thomas Cook's European Rail Timetable states that only passengers with vehicles are conveyed on P&O's night sailings, but does not indicate specific services. The Railfuture international committee has this topic regularly on its agenda, as does the European Passengers' Federation, and we continue to press for pedestrian (and indeed bicycle) access to all ferries and for better publicity for this facility.

Trevor Garrod, Railfuture board member, Lowestoft NR32 1RQ

Bus compensation

I agree with Trevor Garrod (*Railwatch* 124) that passengers should get a refund when forced to travel for part of their journey on a replacement bus. Buses provide an inferior service in many ways. It's even difficult to do a crossword on board.

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby DN31 2AZ, timmickleburgh2002@googlegmail.com

HS2 much for me

As a member of both the Chiltern Society, which is opposed to any new rail route through the Chilterns, as well as Railfuture, I view this development with mixed feelings.

There is a considerable difference in environment impact between a TGV line built across the plains of northern France and the proposed high-speed rail route through the Chilterns.

I have lived close to the West Coast main line for almost 20 years and have only recently seen any payback from the money lavished on its upgrade and the continual increase in fares. If I need to travel north, then Virgin offer me a limited number of trains

that stop at Watford Junction and a few more at Milton Keynes.

My understanding is that HS2 plans to have a station in the Acton area to connect to Crossrail and then nothing until Aylesbury. Above my head at Kings Langley station is a viaduct carrying the M25. Cannot a station be planned close to where the route crosses the M25?

There are already three routes through the heart of the Chilterns, the WCML, the Great Central/Metropolitan to Aylesbury and the Great Central/Great Western which goes to Birmingham already.

Surely the last two could be upgraded for just a fraction of the cost of HS2? The current proposals offer no benefits to anyone living in the area from Stevenage round to Reading.

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Liege is lacking

I have travelled through Liege Guillemins station (featured in *Railwatch* 124) four times since its long-awaited completion. Very fine it is. It gives the impression of being inside a gigantic whale's ribcage.

However I discovered earlier this year that at the behest of the architect there are no public telephones on the station. The nearest ones are somewhere on the other side of the station square. But I needed to make a telephone call to people meeting me near Köln because I had missed a connection because of a trackside incident.

The high-speed line may be complete between the German border and Brussels (work is still going on between Stolberg and Aachen) but there appear still to be bottlenecks at the approaches to Liege and Brussels.

On the return trip, where I have less time to play with and because there is only one cross-border local train every two hours I have to make do with Thalys to be sure of getting back to Tipton the same day. I normally avoid Thalys as travel on this service is not covered by Eurostar and Interrail tickets, whereas travel on inter-city trains is included on a Eurostar ticket to Brussels.

Sadly there do not appear to be any inter-city trains between Brussels and Köln in competition with Thalys. I make do with inter-city to Liege and then use local trains for the rest of the journey, changing at Aachen. Also, although Thalys and Eurostar

are part of Railteam they do not always make good connections. An arrival at Brussels at 17.32 ought to enable one to get the 17.59 departure for St Pancras, but it is three minutes less than the 30 minutes required for check-in. One has to wait for another hour at Midi. Perhaps Thalys could instigate on-board check-in for Eurostar passengers?

While I'm griping, I hope that when Eurostar invests in new rolling stock, it gets some that has doors at both ends of the carriages. This would simplify loading and unloading as everybody is held up by people like me sorting out and stowing their bulky luggage in the racks by the single doorway.

Finally, now that there is a champagne bar at St Pancras, when will we see real-ale bars at Gare du Nord and Brussels Midi?
Donald Payne, Tipton DY4 8EE, Donpayne@btinternet.com

Luton busway

I read the piece about the busway. I would have thought the problems with the Cambridge guided busway would have brought a reality check to those who want to create a busway on the Luton-Dunstable rail line.

I also read that the St Albans Abbey line is going to be converted to light rail and I wondered what advantages this might bring.

It is so frustrating to see what a mess has been made in the UK. For example, there used to be a link between St Albans main line and the Abbey station, but part of it was sold and built on in the past two or three years thus limiting options. The county council had wanted to use this and also the old trackbed between St Albans and Hatfield for light rail. The reinstatement of an Oxford to Cambridge service has likewise been scuppered by the selling-off of parts of the railway, blocking the chance of reinstatement.

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South London line

Roger Blake (*Railwatch* 121) is correct to say that the plans to axe

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Email: editor@railwatch.org.uk
Railwatch also welcomes articles and pictures
Please use email if possible

◆◆◆◆ One-hour 'nature lover's' count in back garden: 27 birds and 37 planes



MPs ON THE RIGHT TRACK: Richard Fuller, third from the left, and Patrick Field, fourth from the right, with other riders at Winslow en route from Bedford to Oxford
Picture: BEN WAINE

In response to Chris Wright (*Railwatch* 124), I can advise that the new MP for Bedford and Kempston is Richard Fuller. Like Patrick Hall (the former Labour MP for Bedford) before him, he has said he supports the regeneration of the Oxford-Bedford rail-link.

Richard Fuller's support was explicitly mentioned in his campaign material and, like Patrick and Liberal Democrat candidate Henry Vann, Richard Fuller took part in a charity cycle ride along the full length of the rail route last September to raise its profile, as well as to raise funds for historic churches.

Sir John Betjeman would, perhaps, have been proud of Richard Fuller, Patrick Hall, Henry Vann

and all the other participants! Henry Vann and the local Liberal Democrats have also said they fully support the rail link, and the elected mayor of Bedford is a Liberal Democrat, as are many Bedford borough councillors.

All of which is very nice, but the view of central government is most important. Their view right now is that cutting costs is the priority.

Do any readers have any ideas on how regenerating a railway can save or, better, make money for central government?

Ben Waine, Sovereigns Quay, Bedford, bedfordoxfordchallenge@googlegmail

the South London Line have come about as a result of Thameslink works at London Bridge rather than the introduction of the East London line extension to Clapham Junction. I think the South London Line Campaign is fully aware of that. What the campaign has been questioning is whether it is actually true that, once the full Thameslink programme has been completed at London Bridge, South London line trains would need to be excluded from the station. I believe that question has yet to be fully and satisfactorily answered.

I have been a long-time supporter of the East London line extension, fully conversant of the benefits it will bring. But what studies have shown is that there is a flow of passengers from the South London line stations to London Bridge and particularly to Victoria whose journeys will be made more difficult if the South London line is

axed and especially if there is no partial replacement, such as the Victoria-Bellingham service, put in place.

I'm not quite sure what Roger is suggesting: That the South London Line Campaign ceases its activities altogether because it all seems too difficult?

John Stewart, Co-ordinator, Lambeth Public Transport Group, SW9 9AU, johnstewart2@btconnect.com

Wrong engine

It would be a terrible thing if backward-looking gricers still preoccupied with the steam age were allowed to penetrate the future perspective of *Railwatch* but from someone who enjoys looking both ways, I hope you will accept the following correction.

The tank engine pictured at the Sheringham crossing reopening in

Railwatch 125 is an N7 not an N2. The N7s worked the Great Eastern inner suburban services "Jazz service" out of Liverpool Street whilst the N2s were responsible for similar services out of King's Cross on the Great Northern section. If you want to remember what an N2 looks and sounds like, the Great Central Railway has recently restored the survivor which is hard at work on the line from Loughborough and if you travel there by train, as all good Railfuture members should, note how far we have progressed since steam was doing the work.

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Editors' note: Apologies for that mistake which was not the fault of the article's author.

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