

Heathrow lacks transport links

SIMON Jenkins contends that Gatwick is “not easy to reach” – yet it is on the M23, close to the M25, and in addition to 10 trains per hour to London has regular direct links to Brighton, Eastbourne, Portsmouth, etc. By contrast, a paucity of rail services from Heathrow to nearby major centres such as Reading, Slough and Uxbridge will continue even when Crossrail opens.

To maintain its status Heathrow has to invest more in the transport needs of its users. The package of solutions I would suggest includes extending the Metropolitan line from Uxbridge to Heathrow; continuing the Crossrail Heathrow branch to join the Great Western main line at Langley; extending the Piccadilly line from Heathrow Terminal 5 to Staines via Colnbrook to connect with South West Trains services and constructing a link between Feltham and Heathrow. Such measures would also cut traffic congestion and pollution and improve connections in London’s periphery where the population is growing.

Shawn Buck

IT is clear from Simon Jenkins’s piece on overriding the objections of a “tiny group of country dwellers” to Gatwick expansion that he does not live near any airport. He also seems to forget England extends beyond the reach of Gatwick Express – what about those travelling from and to the North?

Bruce Neilson

Transparency could boost philanthropy

I APPLAUD Lord Browne for his fresh thinking about the role of philanthropy (July 15). But his ideas on what could be done “to unlock a new age of philanthropy” don’t square with recent research.

Our Money for Good UK report found tax incentives were not important for the vast majority of donors. People donate for many reasons: loyalty to a cause, sense of duty, or simply because friends or family have asked them to.

Our research also found that regardless of motivation, most donors want to know how their donation will be spent. If charities can get better at telling donors about the difference they make, there’s an opportunity to unlock additional annual giving to the value of £665 million.

Sally Bagwell, New Philanthropy Capital



Author unmasked: JK Rowling, now revealed as the writer of “Robert Galbraith’s” *The Cuckoo’s Calling*

JK Rowling is playing games

IT goes without saying that we must applaud JK Rowling and all her works for the huge reading pleasure she has given millions of people, her significant charitable donations and preparedness to speak publicly on the political issues that concern her. But for me the Galbraith “story” smacks slightly of Marie-Antoinette at Le Petit Trianon. Surely good people who have doled out good money for books, film tickets, DVDs and now Pottermore are entitled to a little more transparency from an author whom they have made rich and famous? She may not enjoy the latter but as the Buddhist saying goes, “life is as it is, not what we would wish it to be”.

Clare Conville, Conville & Walsh

THE 470 initial sales of *The Cuckoo’s Calling* are average for UK hardback debut publication, certainly nothing to be disappointed with. Since I posted a blog making this argument, so many authors have written to agree, and say the Galbraith revelations heartened them about their own progress. Publishers need to nurture writers – one day, seven or eight books in to a career, they might write a *Wolf Hall*.

James Smythe, author, *The Machine*

Give us genuine nuclear choices

YESTERDAY’S Trident Alternatives Review puts to bed any notion of a constant nuclear deterrent on the cheap.

However, there are still significant savings to be had. If we were to abandon continuous patrols (against whom?) tomorrow and put two submarines in mothballs to bring them out later when the other two were retired, we could save many billions in running costs, with reduced and delayed investment. It is bizarre that the Government report, overseen by Danny Alexander, refers to lower readiness postures, yet does not analyse the two-boat option.

It is important the country is given the chance to consider genuine steps down the nuclear ladder in a benign strategic environment where the chances of us ever facing alone nuclear blackmail or attack are infinitesimal, a distraction from the real threats we face. This is not only about saving precious resources but also the health and credibility of the global nuclear non-proliferation

How do we persuade other states to forswear nuclear weapons if we, the US’s closest ally in the safest part of the world, cannot take steps in this direction?

P Ingram

regime. How do we persuade other states to forswear nuclear weapons if we, the US’s closest ally in the safest part of the world, cannot take steps in this direction?

P Ingram, executive director, British American Security Information Council

EVEN with the discontinuous coverage offered by cutting the Trident fleet from four to two submarines there would be no effect on the budget until 2025.

If progress had been made in recent years towards all the nuclear powers cutting their building programmes there might be a stronger case to argue this era of defence had passed and a new approach could be adopted. But the world has gone in the opposite direction to President Obama’s 2009 Prague speech hopes for disarmament, with Russia, China, Pakistan, India and North Korea all increasing their arsenals. The huge Russian stockpile of short-range nukes has no raison d’être except to intimidate our allies.

The UK’s national deterrent is

independent and sovereign. There are benefits to both the US and the UK from participating in Trident together, but these are derivative from 40-plus years of co-operation on a sea-based deterrent, not the reason for having one.

Franklin C Miller KBE, former special assistant to George W Bush; former chair, NATO nuclear policy committee

AS ever the Tories avoid mentioning the dependence of our so-called independent deterrent on US satellite targeting, meaning that for “our biggest stick” to work we must always be on good terms with Washington, which will thus write UK foreign policy.

For Conservatives, Trident replacement somehow maintains our global prestige. I would have thought we would be more highly regarded if such vast sums were instead spent showing the world we care for personnel who leave the forces with medical problems, at present often reliant on charities to help them out.

David Dragonetti, E12

Congestion at Waterloo whenever something goes wrong demands urgent solutions. The causes are not hard to find – poor maintenance practices, a lack of contingency planning, train designs ill-suited to high-density commuter traffic. The main problem lies in basic track and points infrastructure. To save costs, many passing loops, sidings and crossovers were removed in the Sixties or Seventies, leaving a system too rigid to route trains around blockages. Bi-directional signalling would help, as would flyovers to avoid a train having to wait while another crosses its path.

Stephen Spark

What was the point of producing, at

considerable expense, Dame Janet Smith’s report on the culture of the BBC during the Savile years? It is difficult to imagine George Osborne leafing through to seek inspiration as to how to resolve the country’s economic difficulties. Its historic nature renders it unlikely that it will help in dealing with the BBC’s myriad present shortcomings. Wouldn’t the money have been better spent producing original TV programmes?

Iain MacMaster

The BBC spends £5 million of taxpayers’ money on Savile probes? Launch an immediate review!

Jeff

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The benefit cap is being introduced nationwide, but local authorities such as Hackney have not been told precisely who will be affected, causing thousands of families unnecessary worry. When will the Government stop punishing people in the name of short-term populism?

Gary Martin, benefits adviser

Brooks Newmark MP observes many voters think a £26,000 benefits cap is too generous. Another area where ministers might listen to public opinion is on cutting the welfare bill for non-working single mothers: no state support until the father is identified and committed to financial support of the mother and child, and local authorities

to set up hostels run by old-fashioned matrons for single mothers rather than giving them flats.

Ivor Hall

Instead of going after an easy target like smokers, Barts should campaign for fewer cars in its surroundings. Car fumes are a bigger health hazard than passive smoking.

Bas Swarthoogt

No amount of campaigning will make any difference: the sort of idiot who litters will always do so. It’s a form of aggression or bullying, defying someone to challenge.

Vanessa

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