

Debating facts on new runway

Byelection is needed

Sir – A report by the Richmond Heathrow Campaign just released at rhcfacts.org/ukhub/ questions how on earth the Airports Commission concluded, based on its own evidence, that Heathrow should have a third runway.

What would you think about a Government decision that increased the overheating in the south-east and worked against a rebalancing of the economy? You would think it was nuts, would you not?

Well, the facts from the commission's report are that Heathrow's third runway would result in a loss of 58m passengers a year from other UK airports, including Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

It would only support an

extra 41m passengers a year concentrated at a single airport in the over-heated south-east. Compatible with the northern powerhouse? Surely not.

Furthermore, the commission's own data shows a reduction of 17m passengers a year for the UK as a whole, including business passengers and domestic passengers, as well as a reduction in flights and connectivity, if the Heathrow option were chosen. Surely a loss for the UK economy.

More than 50 per cent of the new runway capacity would be used for an extra 22m international to international transfers a year, providing little economic value to the UK, as these passengers do not step outside the airport. They contribute to

the noise, are exempt from aviation tax, and use valuable capacity at the expense of UK passengers.

And for those of you who are into macro-economic data, a final astonishing fact: the commission says the investment of £17bn would result in a net benefit of £1.4bn (present value over 60 years).

This sounds a decent sum, but it is negligible in macro-economic terms and within the margin for statistical error. Moreover, benefits appear to be over-estimated and costs under-estimated.

Let us face the facts before investing £17bn on Heathrow airport plus a further £20bn required to improve surface transport access: the evidence shows it will not deliver what we and the Government want. And

we have not even mentioned all the problems of compliance with CO₂, air pollution and noise targets.

These facts are all in the Airports Commission's final report, yet the commission inexplicitly recommends a third runway.

The fact is that there is already significant spare capacity at almost all UK's airports including Heathrow itself, which the commission says has capacity to add another 34m terminating passengers without any additional flights by using larger planes and higher loads. Heathrow is far from full. There is no need for this costly new investment in one airport at the expense of other airports. Allowing the market to grow where it is needed is the right answer –

no new runways.

We challenge the supporters of Heathrow expansion to debate the facts with us before it is too late.

The Government's decision on expanding Heathrow is imminent. The Richmond Society is holding a forum meeting to discuss Heathrow. Richmond Heathrow Campaign will be revealing campaign plans.

The date is Thursday, October 8, at 7.45pm (doors open 7.15pm) at Duke Street Church, Richmond TW9 2DH. Entry is free to Richmond Society members and £2 for non-members.

PETER WILLAN
Chairman, Richmond Heathrow Campaign
richmondheathrowcampaign.org

Rugby fans

Sir – Your news item last week (Calls for more toilets after rugby fans caught short, September 21) raises a key issue in the community that regularly suffers from self-induced, incontinent behaviour by some of the rugby fans.

You reported an account from a Cole Park resident, painting an all-too-familiar picture of our streets, private gardens and driveways being used as public toilets on match days. She called for an extra 50 portable toilets.

In fact the organisers of the Rugby World Cup have told us there has already been an "uplift of toilet provision", as they like to call it.

Chartered Society of Physiotherapy stewards and the Pack volunteers are able to deter or even prevent this antisocial behaviour, so the organisers and Richmond Council have claimed.

But these are not the solutions and, of course, they have not worked.

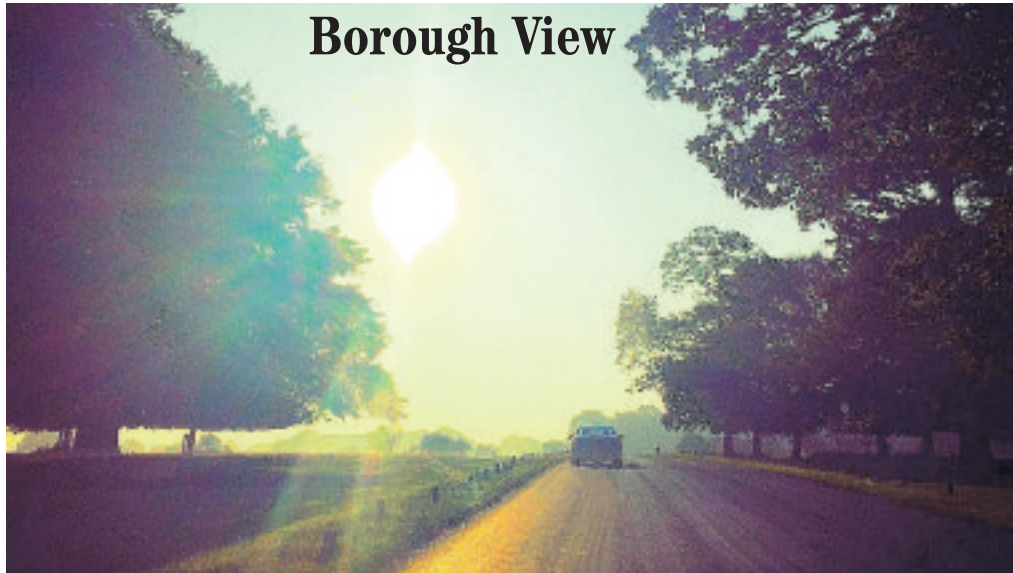
Stopping the sales of Guinness in the stadium during the Rugby World Cup was a harsh measure to take, but that did not work either.

However, the RFU and the borough's police are going to start implementing a real solution. In the aftermath of the London Sevens weekend, the RFU's chief executive Ian Ritchie announced some important changes.

Attendance at next year's Sevens tournament will be reduced by 40 per cent, opening hours will be restricted at the stadium's bars and the police will take extra powers to control drinking outside the stadium.

FRANCIS MCINERNY
Heatham Alliance – Your community network

Borough View



Holly Hambridge took this photo in Richmond park on her my way to work. Do you have a picture you wish to share? Send them to lettersrtt@newsquest.co.uk.

Liberal Democrats made historic school mistakes

Sir – I was surprised to see Liberal Democrat schools spokesman Councillor Frost's line of attack in her recent letter. In her role, she will obviously try to criticise the administration. She would not be doing her job if she did not, and the Liberal Democrats have plenty of time to write letters in opposition.

But she was obviously told by her leadership to defend past Lib Dem actions, and in true Lib Dem fashion she completely distorted the picture while being entirely hypocritical. Part of Councillor Hodgins' role is very clearly to hold schools to account, which is exactly what he was

doing in answering a question. Coun Frost then failed to mention that immediately after that question, she herself got up and attacked the borough's new sixth forms, which of course was not a Lib Dem policy. So much for her supportive approach.

Coun Frost is a new councillor and may not know the history about her party putting the three secondaries outside local control, but what her letter does reveal is that the Lib Dems still do not acknowledge their mistakes when they were in charge of our schools.

Putting three schools out as sponsored academies was their headline schools

achievement. If they had been in charge of education for the past five years there would be no sixth forms in our schools, the college would not be about to be re-developed, there would not be three new secondaries in the borough by 2017, it is doubtful we would have re-built in train for our two special education needs schools, or have built the more than 600 new primary places, and they certainly would not have created Achieving for Children, saving our residents millions and freeing staff to innovate.

The Conservatives in administration have been bold in supporting our schools

family and will continue to be ambitious.

Coun Frost's big promise to reach out to schools should she be elected sounds friendly, but means nothing tangible. One of Teddington's Lib Dem councillors has just defected to Labour, saying the new Lib Dem leader does not seem to stand for anything. Jeremy Corbyn will not be the Labour leader forever.

So no doubt it must have been on her mind that locally Gareth Roberts' Lib Dems are exactly the same.

They must not be put in charge of our schools again.

COUN GARETH EVANS
Hampton Wick

Sir – Whatever we may think about the direction someone moves their political standpoint to and from, it is quite reasonable, even positive, that they do so. People will always do this, and even if we disagree with them, we should support their right as an individual to do so.

Changing personal opinion, which seems to lie behind Jennifer Churchill's move from the Liberal Democrats to Labour, gives evidence of someone who is at least thinking about events and policies with an open mind.

However, while it is entirely right and proper for an individual to be allowed change in their political opinions, and for them to move their support from one political party to another, it becomes quite another matter when they are an elected representative. Had someone moved from a specific party into independence there would be a different case to be made. But it lacks respect for the voters when someone elected as representative of one party then makes such a "crossing of the floor" to another party, but fails to ask the electors their opinion on that.

It is their wishes she is supposed to represent, and the current refusal to call a by-election means the wishes clearly stated by Teddington voters are being ignored.

Jennifer Churchill was elected councillor by the voters in Teddington ward because she stood for the Liberal Democrats – that much is absolutely clear from looking at all the votes cast in 2014. Some parties received across the board support for all their candidates who were thereby elected, or nearly elected. The party she has chosen to move to received no significant support, and the decision not to put her change of mind to an electorate she clearly can no longer properly represent is thus erroneous.

To remain on the council as a representative for the people in Teddington, who have little taste for her new-found views, is wrong.

What is more, she can have no credibility. For no matter what nice things they may say about her, and no matter how nice a person she is, they know and we know that Teddington would not have returned her had she stood for election as a Labour candidate. She no longer represents us. To any who say "they might have voted for her", the simple answer is to resign and put that possibility to the test of a by-election.

THE REV DOMINIC STOCKFORD
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