



RANDALL'S RAILWAY

THIRD RUNWAY? WHY NOT A HIGH SPEED LINE?

The Government is backing a third runway at Heathrow, when it should be giving the green light for a new high-speed rail network, argues

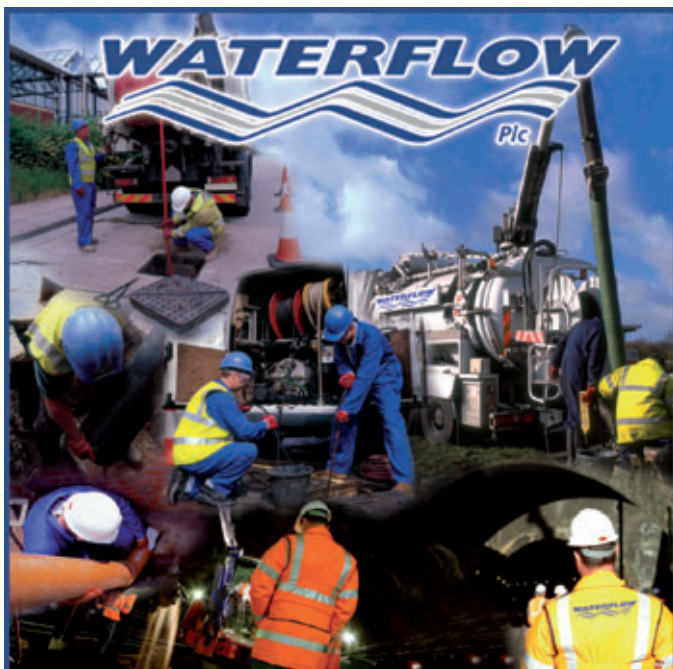
Chris Randall

Cutting greenhouse gases is no longer an option, so the climate change experts tell us. In fact, drastically reducing harmful emissions is imperative if we are to avoid ending up looking like extras in *The Day the Earth Caught Fire*.

So why, you might ask, is the Government doggedly backing plans for a third runway at Heathrow – urgently needed, apparently, despite previous assurances from the British Airports Authority that Terminal 5 would mark the end of expansion – whilst it still can't make up its mind about a high-speed rail network that would slash the number of heavily-polluting internal flights? One unavoidable conclusion is that, in spite of all the obvious environmental benefits that railways have over other forms of transport, the airlines are simply way out in front when it comes to lobbying their pals in government. In a recent speech to the Royal Aeronautical Society, Lord Soley, campaign director of Future Heathrow, a pressure group dedicated to expansion at Britain's main airport, argued for what he called a 'fresh start' at Heathrow.

'We have an opportunity to show that a modernised, claimed the Labour peer, is vital if Heathrow is to stay ahead of Europe's other major airports at Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam. It's a well-rehearsed argument based on the frankly balmy premise that without a third runway – and who knows how many additional terminals – Heathrow face and expanded Heathrow can be developed as an intermodal hub,' Soley told a sympathetic audience, whilst carefully neglecting to mention the tons of extra CO₂ that will be pumped into the atmosphere if the policy is pursued. Expansions becoming an aviation outpost, and Britain's economy will be sent into a tailspin.

'Over 40 per cent of passengers flying from Manchester to Heathrow are transferring to international flights and around 30 per cent from Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow,' said Soley, adding that hell would most probably



The Waterflow Group Plc is one of the UK's leading providers of drainage, sewerage, civil engineering and construction services to industrial, commercial, rail and water industry clients.

Waterflow now offers a new UV-light-cure lining system
• Fast installation, very strong and environmentally friendly

For asset maintenance above or below ground you can trust Waterflow.

The Waterflow Group Plc
12-16 David Road • Poyle Trading Estate • Colnbrook • SL3 0DG

E-mail: sales@waterflow.co.uk • Website: www.waterflow.co.uk
Tel: 01753 810999 • Fax: 01753 681442



Shutterstock

freeze over (my words, not his) before any of them could be persuaded to swap the plane for a train journey to London followed by a torturous Tube journey out to Heathrow. Hasn't he heard of the Heathrow Express?

He's got a point. But instead of just wringing its hands in despair and meekly giving in to the short-sighted Heathrow lobby, the Government should act now and give the go-ahead for a new high-speed rail link from St Pancras International via Heathrow to the Midlands, the north-west of England and Glasgow. If it did, it would lay the foundations for a significant switch from internal airlines to rail with the majority of Heathrow's air passengers arriving by train once the line opened. Short-haul flights to the continent would also be slashed, thanks to the St Pancras link creating more slots for lucrative long-haul flights overcoming, the need for a third runway. It's a no-brainer, of course. And yet, ministers just don't seem to get it!

Encouragingly, the tide appears to be turning against the airport expansionists, helped, no doubt, by the ignominious opening of T5 and increasing concern about the environmental damage caused by air travel. In a notable U-turn, the Tories have abandoned their support for a third runway and urged the Government to consider alternatives, including a north-south high speed line linked to Heathrow and the Channel tunnel. Hallelujah. Others lining up against a third runway and Terminal 6 include London's new Mayor Boris Johnson, Greenpeace, the National Trust, most of London's MPs, the Liberal Democrats and even the Archbishop of Canterbury.

The ball is now firmly in Ruth Kelly's court. The transport secretary is expected to give her final verdict on a third runway any day now, and most analysts believe she will give it the thumbs up. However, a change of heart, even at this late stage, could earn a floundering government some much-needed credit. Ministers are seriously out of step with their constant cosying up to aviation and endless prevarication over the desirability of high speed rail.

Since it was opened last November, High Speed 1 has cut 20 minutes off journey times from London to Paris and Brussels, leading to record numbers of passengers travelling by Eurostar. Indeed, the rail link is now so popular that airlines have virtually given up competing with Eurostar on both routes. It ought to be enough to persuade the Government that rail, not air, is the future. A second high-speed line could see a 40-minute journey time from Heathrow to Birmingham and 1hr 15mins to Manchester. Sadly, ministers continue to pay lip service to developing a sustainable transport policy, based on low carbon emissions, but when push comes to shove, they roll over and cave in to the monopolistic BAA and the big airlines. It's time the railway lobby got its act together and gave aviation a run for its money.

Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson – more usually known as simply Boris – breezed into City Hall last month vowing to make good his promise to scrap bendy buses and replace them with a greener, more up-to-date version of the iconic Routemaster. London's new Mayor followed that up with a bold promise to boost police patrols on the Tube and wage war on the drunken yobs that often make late-night travel on London Underground an unpleasant and frightening experience. Nobody – except the drunks – is going to oppose a ban on booze on the Tube as part of a wider crackdown on anti-social behaviour, although Ian Johnston, chief constable of British Transport police, is probably scratching his head wondering where the extra Bobbies are coming from.

More controversially, Johnson now has to decide how to proceed with the desperately needed modernisation of the crumbling Tube, following the collapse last year of the hapless Metronet. As I write, Metronet is due to come out of administration with ownership of its two multi-billion pound public private partnership contracts, to maintain and upgrade nine of London Underground's 12 lines, passing to Transport for London.

Instead of just wringing its hands in despair and meekly giving in to the short-sighted Heathrow lobby, the Government should act now and give the go-ahead for a new high speed rail link

It is inconceivable that this failed PPP could be replaced with another, despite the comparative success of the remaining private contractor Tube Lines. Londoners – who have been left with a whopping £2bn bill thanks to Metronet's incompetence – wouldn't buy it and nor would the *Evening Standard*, whose backing for Johnson during the contest for Mayor arguably played a crucial role in the defeat of Ken Livingstone.

But the idea that publicly-owned London Underground could shoulder the burden of bringing the Tube up to the standards expected of a 21st century metro is equally absurd. There simply isn't enough money in the kitty. In fact, it's already apparent that a large chunk of the work contained in Metronet's ridiculously complex contracts has had to be scaled back. The only solution now is to involve the private sector, but in a way that sees a genuine transfer of risk instead of the 'heads I win, tails you lose' deals that enabled Metronet's shareholders to walk away with minimal losses. The alternative is years more misery for long-suffering passengers, who already travel in horribly cramped conditions on a network that looks as if it hasn't changed much since it was built in the 19th century. If that happens Boris would be wise to put the booze ban on hold. Getting drunk to the point of oblivion could soon be the only bearable way of travelling on the Tube.



<p>Generic Health & Safety Operative test Health & Safety Supervisor test Emergency First Aid Driving Safety Health & Safety in the Office (inc VDU assessment)</p> <p>City & Guilds Approved Courses Health & Safety in the workplace NVQ Permanent Way Maintenance Manual Handling Fire Awareness Chemical Awareness</p> <p>Powered Plant Training to City & Guilds standard</p>	<p>Railway Safety Critical courses, from PTS / Track Induction to Engineering Supervisor</p> <p>Level 1, 2, 3 Diploma for IT Users.</p> <p>This list is not exhaustive, if you require a course you cannot see here do not hesitate to contact us on:</p> <p>Tel: 01785 764477</p> <p>Fax: 01785761764</p> <p>Email: enquires@renowntraining.co.uk</p>
--	---

Competency Management Service
Worried about keeping up to date with your Safety Critical Assessments?
Let Renown Training take care of all your Safety Critical Assessments and ensure they are carried out to the highest level and on time in order to maintain your staff's Safety Critical Competencies.

