

THE COURIER & Advertiser

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NO MEETING OF MINDS

EUROPEAN Union leaders who hoped for a series of deals with African Union officials and heads of government have been sent home from a conference in Lisbon to think again.

Reaching back into a history of grievance and self-pity, AU commission president Alpha Oumar Konare accused the EU of persisting with a colonial approach to trade. That is unfair.

The EU operates preferential trading pacts with former African colonies. Pressure for change is coming, in the first instance, not from European countries but from the World Trade Organisation.

It is the WTO that is urging the two sides to end special arrangements that favour African countries selling produce to Europe. It says that other trading nations should not be excluded.

An impression was created in Lisbon that African countries were united in their rejection of a new regime for trade, but that is not accurate. It is more a case of east versus west in Africa.

Last month, five members of the East African Community—Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, Rwanda and Tanzania—signed up to a deal in which they undertook to open their markets to EU goods over 25 years providing specified local industries remain protected by customs barriers: in other words, a compromise.

Aside from WTO strictures, the EU also wants a deal to restrain Chinese influence on the continent. At present EU investment goes to African countries that claim not to be corrupt, but the Chinese have no such scruples and this is giving them the edge as they siphon off raw materials to fuel their economy.

Needless to say, even the limited progress on this front was not centre stage in Lisbon. That dubious honour revolved around the presence of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe. He it was who asserted that Africans had fought for human rights from oppressive rule while he presides over a country that is oppressive in just about every way you can think of.

Immigration was high on the agenda. This reflects the pathetic convoys of ramshackle craft that are paddled north from African countries by desperate families hoping to reach the promised land of EU largesse. But Mr Mugabe himself perpetuates a variation of the same humanitarian disaster: it is from his rule that tens of thousands flee by any means they can to South Africa.

Prior to this summit, Gordon Brown was ticked off by the EU Commission President Barroso for boycotting a conference that allowed Mugabe to attend. In the event, it is the prime minister's judgment that has been vindicated, not that of Mr Barroso.

HEART OF GLENROTHES

It is difficult for anyone much under 50 to realise how many hopes were invested in the generation of new towns built from the end of the 1940s onwards. They were to set new standards in purpose-built urban development, often inspired by Ebenezer Howard's brilliant garden city concept. The early precincts so characteristic of Glenrothes were intended to be a complete break with the fetid overcrowding of the past and in that they succeeded.

A few of the original assumptions, such as mining at Rothes and overspill from Glasgow, proved short-lived but there was a brave attempt to retain a human scale in housing without diluting the influence of a powerful modernity.

In some ways this has been beneficial. The town is rich in parks, open spaces and striking public art. The Kingdom Shopping Centre is a big draw.

On the negative side are town centre examples of brutal and unloved architecture, hideous mistakes from start to finish. New Glenrothes House is just one spectacular example of an undistinguished genre that is all too common throughout Britain. Its demolition as part of a revamped town centre will be cheered.

Even a multi-storey car park on the site can hardly be more offensive to the eye. In fact, Fifers are entitled to expect that it will a considerable improvement as part of the overall redevelopment. The same goes for the £35 million foodstore and expansion of the Kingdom Centre.

COLD HILL MISHAPS

Two walkers were caught out by the weather in separate incidents at the weekend, one in the Lomonds and one on Ben Vorlich. Caution, which need not imply being unadventurous, is needed.

The new ranger base in Glen Doll, when completed, should have a role in explaining sensible safeguards.

QUOTE: The Third World is an artificial construction of the West. —Shiva Naipaul.

Tunnel vision with an eye on future

ACCORDING TO John Carson, there is only one option for a replacement Forth Crossing that is future proof, and that's a tunnel.

The man behind the Skye Bridge has set up a pressure group, Forthtag (Forth Tunnel Action Group), which he claims influenced Transport Scotland into including tunnels in their public exhibition of options this summer.

"Without Forthtag," John says, "All you'd have seen were bridge options."

John reckons a tunnel is the only affordable way of incorporating heavy rail into a new crossing, which he sees as essential to stop it becoming as congested as the current bridge.

Born in Ormiston, East Lothian, John (58) left school at 16 to train as a draughtsman, before getting an honours degree in civil engineering from Heriot Watt University.

He went to work for Ove Arup then joined Miller Civil Engineering, where he led the team responsible for the construction of the Skye Bridge.

"The project took six or seven years to take from the cradle to the bridge you see today," he says. "It was the first PFI project in Scotland."

John was also on the board of the Skye Bridge Company Ltd, set up to oversee the running of the bridge and the tolls. Tolls were scrapped in 2004 when the then Scottish Executive, acting on a Lib Dem manifesto pledge, paid the company £27 million to buy back the bridge.

John, however, says there was a clause in the contract capping the amount the company was allowed to make from tolls. "Once the bridge was paid for, that was it," he says. "Had they waited another four or five years they would have been able to scrap the tolls without paying out anything."

After leaving Miller in 1995, John worked on the Kinnear Sewage Works, one of the first PFI projects in Northern Ireland, then for the English Highways Traffic Information System. He was also involved with the introduction of TGV high-speed lines into Amsterdam.

He then became a director of Network Tube Lines, where he worked on the privatisation of the Jubilee, Northern and Piccadilly lines of the London Underground.

John was made a senior member of a team set up by the Labour Government to take Railtrack out of administration and turn it into the not-for-profit company Network Rail.

He went on to become director of maintenance for Network Rail before going into semi-retirement. He now does part-time contracting and consultancy work.

Despite his involvement in so many PFI projects, John has his own reservations about the financial model, which has been criticised for taking costs "off the balance sheet" but leaving future generations to pay for the project.

"I don't believe that PFI is always the way to go and I certainly don't believe in PFI when it comes to the railways."

"Railways on the continent are all still nationalised, and many of them have fares that are cheaper during peak times. Scotrail increases fares during peak times. We need a change of thinking if we're going to encourage more people out of their cars."

John thinks the railways were safer before privatisation. "In the old British Rail days, they employed guys that knew one or two miles of track like the back of their hands. They lived in the local village and they would walk their stretch of track every day. If there was something wrong, it would be fixed immediately. When privatisation happened, the first thing they did was shed staff. These old British Rail guys, who lived and breathed their job and walked the track every day, were fired and replaced with regional guys."

John admires the funding model used to build New York's metro system. "They used what they called Metropolitan Bonds. They were bought by large institutions for 30 years for a guaranteed 5% return. The aggregate in terms of PFI is regularly 7.5%."

"And with PFI you give up control of it for 30 years, whereas with the

Metropolitan Bonds it remains in Government control—although given the state of the existing bridge, that's not always a good thing.

"The SNP have picked up on this bonds idea, and I believe that's how they plan to finance the new crossing."

However the Forth crossing is financed, John has strong views on what format it should take. He is of the strong opinion that the Scottish Government must build a tunnel.

His reasoning is simple—he reckons that by the time a new bridge opens it will be as congested as the current one.

"Currently, 37,500 cars cross the bridge from Fife into Edinburgh each day, the bulk of them during the morning rush period. The annual growth in traffic has been a steady 2.5 to 3% since the current bridge opened."

"By the time a new bridge opens the number of vehicles crossing on each side of the bridge every day will be 50,000."

"According to Transport Scotland's reports, the existing Forth Rail Bridge could be upgraded to add another 2000

seats by 2026. If the existing bridge is converted to carry trams, which is far from certain as there have been no pronouncements made on what the future of the current bridge will be, then they could carry an additional 2500 per day."

"So improvements in current rail and the addition of trams could carry an extra 4500 passengers. Yet, there will be 12,500 more cars crossing. Assuming each car has one passenger, that's an extra 12,500 people at least. The trams and trains won't even be able to cope with the additional demand, never mind making a dent in the numbers currently using the bridge."

John believes the only solution is an immersed tube tunnel that can carry heavy rail.

"There is only one bridge in the world that takes both cars and heavy



John Carson of Forthtag.

rail, and that is the Oresund Bridge that links Denmark and Sweden. Yet it's only 490 metres long. To cross the Forth the bridge would have to be more than 600 metres.

"According to Transport Scotland's own reports, constructing a bridge that could take heavy rail would cost twice as much as one for cars and trams only."

Geological problems, including a 120-metre trench cut by glacial ice melt, and mining for coal, oil shale and limestone, make boring a tunnel under the bed of the Forth problematic and costly.

John would like to see an immersed tube tunnel, which he says could be constructed in Rosyth then floated out and dropped into 12-metre deep trenches in the bed of the Forth, before being buried to protect it from damage.

"The tunnel would include three lanes in each direction for cars, a corridor for pedestrian access and two tubes for high-speed rail."

But surely, even if heavy rail is included, Waverley and Haymarket stations could not accommodate all these extra trains?

"No, they couldn't. We are limited by our Victorian infrastructure. But the business centre of Edinburgh is moving west, so we should be building with the aim of linking up with a new, purpose-built station to the west of Haymarket, to be built sometime in the future. We need to think outside the box on this one. Even if facilities for rail aren't needed for 10 or 20 years, at least they will be there."

A tunnel would cut across two RAMSAR (protected wetland) sites. However, because it would be buried, the ground would heal in time. A bridge would permanently destroy part of the

Forth SPA, which is a RAMSAR area and contains two SSSIs (Site of Special Scientific Interest)."

In the summer of 2005, John set up the Forth Tunnel Action Group along with Keith Giblett from South Queensferry Community Council, architect Douglas Fleet and, Queensferry councillor George Grubb.

The group are lobbying for a tunnel option, and John has had meetings with Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson and Finance Secretary John Swinney.

As all Forthtag's members are connected with South Queensferry, however, the accusation could be levelled that they don't want yet another bridge, with its noise and intrusion, built on their doorstep.

"That is an accusation that has been levelled at me, but it's not the case."

John pulls out a map of the proposed route for the new bridge, which is further to the west than the current road bridge.

"The bridge will actually take traffic away from Queensferry," he reckons. "From my upstairs window I can just see the span of the current road bridge. The proposed new bridge would not even be visible from my house."

So why has he put so much of his time, effort and engineering expertise into investigating and pushing the tunnel option?

"Because it's in the best interests of Scotland. If we get it wrong, we'll be doing our country a disservice. We'll have to live with the results of what we build for the next 120 years—so we have to get it right. No-one's going to come along and build a third crossing."

For more information, visit www.forthtag.co.uk

The Monday Interview by Jack McKeown

More on the life of Burnbank's feted matron

WRITES J. D. PIRIE of Dundee, "In your article on Burnbank Nursing Home, Broughty Ferry, the name of Connie Jump was mentioned."

BY CRAIGIE

"I remember my late mother telling me that she was a bridesmaid to a Connie Jump when she was married in India. My late mother and Connie were children's nannies, both with charges in India."

"Connie's fiance's name was Jackson but everyone just called him Jacko. He was in the army and when Connie went to India with her charge, Jacko asked for a transfer so he could be near her."

"It was not to be a big wedding; my mother was a bridesmaid and some of the other nannies were guests."

"Connie bought a very expensive dress for the occasion but then changed her mind and bought something considerably cheaper the day before the event."

"They did, however, make a nice-looking couple with Jacko smart in his kilt."

"I think that the wedding took place in Barrackpore, India in 1935 and that Jacko was in The Black Watch."

Another stalwart

MRS HELEN SYMINGTON contributes, "My mother always referred to Miss Jump at Burnbank Nursing Home as Dolly."

"After suffering a stroke, my great-aunt spent some weeks in Miss Jump's care but always spoke about 'Jolly Dump', which used to cause great amusement."

"Another midwifery stalwart, Cis Morrison, wielded a rod of iron at Westbay Nursing Home about the same time."



"Dad—can't you just READ me a story?"

Mrs Symington adds, "Another article, about Lady MacRobert, also brought back memories, as one of my best friends at The School of Domestic Science in Aberdeen in the early '50s lived in Alastair House at Tarland, which was an RAF convalescent/holiday home gifted by Lady MacRobert."

"My friend's father was manager there until a fire closed the house down for a number of years."

Running for train

"REGARDING RECENT correspondence concerning the Overgate/Nethergate (Dundee), I remember well the Cafe Royal in Thorther Row," writes D. M. Clark.

"It was owned by Mrs Henderson (whose husband used to play for Rangers, I believe)."

"As a young engineer in Timex, Milton of Craigie, myself and a colleague Jim Balmer, used to get the No 28 bus downtown before catching the train, after working overtime."

"I remember a pint of Ballingall's heavy (surprised no one has resurrected Bally's). Also I was introduced to Lawson's pork pies with French mustard, which cost 8d in sensible money (3.33p now). I also remember, while doing day release at the 'Tech', having lunch of 'peh, beans and chups' for 2/6 in Wallace's peh shop in Castle

Street or, if we were feeling flush, at Franchi's in the Overgate."

"In those days, when evening classes finished at the same time as the last train to Arbroath at 9.30, we used to run down the closes, by the opticians on Meadowside, then Peter Street, then Candle Lane, to the East Station."

"Then, if you were lucky, you got a compartment. If not, you threw your books in the guard's van and he dragged you aboard just as the train was leaving."

"At the first stop (West Ferry) you transferred to a compartment. Happy Days!"

What goes around. . .

"KEEP A thing seven years and you'll find a use for it" used to be a common saying.

It still applies if the shop windows are anything to go by, says one reader.

If the '60s generation had held on to their Mary Quant-style clothes, they would have been right in fashion.

This reader says she can see very little difference between the patterns and styles of some of the dresses on sale today.

Even Twiggy has made a comeback and looks even better than she did in her heyday, she says.

Email: craigie@thecourier.co.uk

Less from councillors for more taxpayers' money

Sir,—In case anyone hasn't noticed, our Perth and Kinross councillors are now in receipt of salaries and associated pensions—at taxpayers' expense. One of the reasons given for these rewards is the alleged additional time commitment now required to fulfil their responsibilities.

Why, then, do we read that P&K councillors have just voted in favour of reducing their full council meetings from every six weeks to every eight weeks—or six times a year? The somewhat pathetic excuse given for this reduction is that their diaries for Wednesdays (the traditional meeting day) are becoming "congested".

Are they not aware there are another four working days in every week? Perhaps one of these councillors (if they have time!) could explain why we are getting less for more taxpayers' money?

G. M. Lindsay, Whinfield Gardens, Kinross.

What are they budgeting for?

Sir,—For a new Forth crossing to cost about the same as the Millau Viaduct in France (about the same length as the present Forth Road Bridge, but much higher), and be completed by 2016 at a cost of £2.8 billion, inflation would have had to be running at an average of 15% per annum since 2002.

The present rate is about 2%. If FETA's figures (The Courier, December 6), are correct they must be expecting massive overpricing and graft—probably far for the course in this country.

Sandy Henderson, Faulds Farm, Braco, Dunblane.

Been through all this before

Sir,—In a recent article, Nightclub vow from developer, the developer maintained his proposed Esplanade development is not to be a nightclub. May I add 'not at the moment'.

We have been through this all before. The Chalet was just a dance hall, unlicensed at first, and over the years became a proper nightclub, with all its attendant miseries. We

do not want to experience that kind of distress again. No matter what assurances are given, it's what happens after closing time that matters. That's when troubles begin.

What I find so terrifying is the size of the proposed building. The ground floor is almost three times larger than the present one and is to seat 94 diners. The top floor is to have a function room, bar and dance floor to cater for approx 300 people. Can you imagine all these people leaving at the proposed time of midnight, and the noise and chaos that will abound?

The waterfront is not a place for a building of this size. It would be an absurdity. The planners have been trying to make the beach a children's play area and so far have done a good job. They do not want to spoil it by having the surrounding area choc-a-bloc with traffic e.g. delivery vans and lorries.

Anyone approaching the waterfront will be faced with the rear of the building which will be like a huge wall hiding all sight of sea and sand. Any construction on this site should be in accordance with the conservation area and serve as a beach amenity.

I appeal to Dundee and Broughty Ferry people to put their objections in writing to

the planning authorities to help keep our beach front free from such development.

V. Tait, 14 Castle Terrace, Broughty Ferry.

Deserves a fair hearing

Sir,—Re recent articles regarding local businessman Mr Nazir Ahmed Kashmiri and his proposal to refurbish the former East Coast Watersports Pavilion. The premises in question are an eyesore and have lain derelict and been habitually vandalised over the last 10 or so years.

I appreciate there may be concerns as to the impact a commercial business may have on the residential amenity, but surely development of a derelict property will enhance it and bring prosperity to the community?

I note that Castle Terrace residents have engaged in some investigation into the business credentials of the developer and his past business and realise they have valid concerns, but they have acted like a kangaroo court.

They have passed judgment before there has been a fair and balanced public airing of the matter. I firmly believe the proposal deserves such and it will be done in due

course through the robust process of the planning and licensing bodies.

I can see no need to form an independent residents' action group when there are stronger, more vibrant bodies within the wider community (the community council, Broughty Ferry Traders' Association, Broughty Ferry Community Safety Panel etc.). These bigger community groups would be able to raise any concerns this relatively small group of residents may have with regard to this development with the relevant parties.

Almost every other town in the United Kingdom, including Dundee, has maximised their potential to develop their waterfront esplanades and boulevards. Broughty Ferry needs to evolve and grasp the opportunities it may have to enhance the residential amenity of the Esplanade waterfront.

This development is not going to be a night-club, it is a restaurant which fits in well with the area and can only enhance the residential amenity, community safety and architectural aspects of the existing buildings in this area.

Grant Edward, 647A Arbroath Road, Broughty Ferry.

A triumph in planning

Sir,—What a triumph of planning and foresight, by whichever authority is responsible, in closing one of Fife's busiest arteries over a weekend to cut down tree branches.

The A92 was closed between Preston and Balfarg causing all traffic to drive through the myriad of Glenrothes roundabouts to continue their journeys north or south. This work undoubtedly has to be done and when better than when everyone is trying to finish their Christmas shopping a couple of weeks before the big day? Shopkeepers in Glenrothes and Kirkcaldy must have been slightly aggrieved knowing people living north of Glenrothes would be heading away from the mayhem towards Dundee and Perth.

It's this kind of superb planning which make our road and transport system what it is, among the worst in Europe!

John Strachan, 23 Beechwood Avenue, Glenrothes.

Letters should be accompanied by an address and a daytime telephone number. Email: letters@thecourier.co.uk

THE COURIER

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From The Courier files . . .

100 YEARS AGO The Courier AND ADVERTISER

THE SALVATION ARMY'S 'Anti-Suicide Bureau' in New York reports that more distressing appeals have come under its notice recently as a result of the financial crisis than at any time since its establishment. The chief of the bureau has collapsed under the strain. It is estimated that the unemployed in New York City now number 125,000.

50 YEARS AGO Courier AND Advertiser MR J. W. TAYLOR, Ministry of Supply, was asked yesterday in the Commons when it was intended that rubber should replace leather for the soles of soldiers' boots. He said a boot with composition sole had been developed, and 500 pairs were scheduled to go on trial for 18-20 weeks. Two types, an ankle boot and a high boot, are being tested.

25 YEARS AGO THE COURIER AND ADVERTISER THREE ARMED men made a daylight raid on a Rosyth sub-post office yesterday, on a busy thoroughfare within a few yards of the naval base. About £4000 was taken. Two men armed with firearms and a third brandishing a blunt instrument burst into the shop, held three female assistants at bay, and robbed the post office section.

Advertisement for Forthcoming Marriages, including contact information for the Registrar General.