

TFL trains

Last week-end I tried a day return to London from Twyford by train. Whilst this line is outside my constituency it is close to the northern boundary. I went outbound by TFL and returned by Great Western.

A large sum has been spent on changed logos, signs and facilities on the stations to introduce the TFL brand. The trains both ways were little used. They were running too many carriages. The TFL trains have nine carriages when two or three would have done. The seats were hard and uncomfortable especially on the Great Western.

The TFL railway was designed for five day a week mass commuting. The trains lack toilets and envisage a lot of people standing, using hanging straps in the large open central areas in the carriages. The seats are down the sides. The idea seems to have been to sell commuters an uncomfortable strap hanging experience at a high price. The poor service of Network Rail is one of the main reasons people do not want to return to five day working in an office. The pandemic allowed a major revolt against the nationalised train service with timetables and standards laid down by government.

The train I went on was an expensive way of carrying out a leisure journey for taxpayers. Clearly TFL need to look at how to make it more attractive for the leisure travellers who will play an increasing role in providing passengers to offset the decline in people travelling to work. The nationalised railway shows no wish yet to publish a plan to innovate or to change the source of its revenues to justify its huge state backed costs. Getting to the station by car, parking, paying and then crossing the track to access the station was not easy. Railway planners need to grasp that most of us need to drive to get to a station and see that as part of the journey. The state railways needs to work with Council roads and highways to make it easier.