

Why don't the railways want our business?

It's the Bank holiday week-end. Many people want to travel to be with family or friends. Others want to take a short break at a UK holiday destination, giving some work to our hotels, visitor attractions and restaurants. An effectively nationalised railway which is heavily loss making has an opportunity to provide us with a great public service. It could take some of the strain off the roads. It could earn some much needed extra revenue to offset some of the huge losses it is racking up and expensing to the taxpayer.

Instead the papers and media report a long list of closed lines and services. Maybe when the railway earned most of its non subsidy money from fleecing commuters for the their five days a week service it made sense to do maintenance at Bank holidays when the commuters did not need the travel. Haven't the railways noticed the five day a week commuting model is broken. We have witnessed the post covid revolt of the commuter, with so many agreeing with their employers far fewer days in the office to escape the high costs and poor service of their past railway experience. Surely the railway bosses should be scouring the booking patterns for holidays, special events, sporting activities and the rest to see how they can capture more of the leisure and pleasure market. That means not only keeping open the full range of lines for a busy Bank holiday but also flexing the pattern of services to attract more of the travelling public. The A 303, the M5 , the M6 , the M25 and all the other overloaded holiday roads need this help from this expensive set of great straight routes spanning the country and giving traffic free access to all our main cities and tourist destinations.

The largely nationalised railway is another example of huge sums of public money and public sector power being deployed by so called independent bodies. Ministers need to intervene more when so much public money and the public interest is at stake. If the railway management will not serve the railway demand when it is there they need to be told to do so or changed for those who will. We need business people guiding the railway and helping the Ministers who want to grow the business and make sensible offers to people who do not want to sit in endless traffic jams if there is something better on offer. A big sporting or cultural event should be a business opportunity, not a reason to ration or even close the relevant station for fear of too many people.