

OBJ 149/4A

Closing Statement on 27 January 2011 by Professor Sir Muir Gray

The Trojan Horse was how one Lakeside resident described the Evergreen 3 proposal. However, I have been in the public service long enough to know that it is rarely able to organise a conspiracy, and our current problem is the result of confusion in the Department of Transport, which the County Council failed to spot.

Our problem is that we are in a well conducted Inquiry into a proposal to introduce a new passenger train service from Oxford to London. As a regular commuter, I see no need for additional capacity. I have never had to stand to Paddington in morning rush hour. I see no need to have a sixty six minute journey to Marylebone, which is only two stations along the Hammersmith and City line, or ten minutes walk from Paddington, and the proposal to increase the number of rail users at Oxford's current station can only have been made by people who have never tried to drive along the Botley Road or Hythe Bridge Street in the rush hours, as was admitted by the Chiltern witnesses. I know the Inquiry is only into the acceptability of the scheme and not the correctness of the policy decision, but it is impossible not to raise this issue because we are primarily concerned not by this proposal but by , in Mr Gilder's beautiful phrase 'somebody else's scheme',

If, as we predict, there is a massive increase in freight transport by the publicly funded Network Rail in four years time, and we find that the mitigation measures put in by the private scheme to increase passenger traffic are unable to maintain the zero increase in noise and vibration to which Chiltern have given a commitment, the fact that the landowner is 'Inured' and bound to the conditions will be of no help because we will have to take legal action against a huge well funded (well funded from the public purse) organisation to, for example, increase the size of, or replace, the noise wall from two metres to four metres. We will be blown out of the water by the size and cost of the task.

Thus we feel the inspector has tackled the wrong proposal well; it should have been a proposal from Network Rail proposal, or a joint proposal of Network Rail with Chiltern.

There are some points that I would like to make about the process. These points may reflect ignorance but we cannot be expected to know as much about process as the Inquiry has presumed. Helen Wilson has been an excellent programme officer but a short 'How to present evidence, cross examine, be cross examined, submit submissions and present a closing submission guide' would have been very helpful, and should be developed for all who participate in an Inquiry for, hopefully, the first and only time in their lives.

My principal concern about process is the handling of what economists call the externalities of the business case. The business case was included in the papers sent to objectors, but the business case contained neither an explicit amount for mitigation nor any estimate of the cost of the negative effects of the scheme on the property values of houses close to the track, and the effect of this on the wellbeing of their occupants. It is not possible to see, for example, the difference in the cost of a two metre or four metre wall, the latter being essential to keep the particulates and chemicals from the high freight trains from Lakeside houses and gardens, and debates about 'reasonableness' therefore have to be conducted by words alone.

We estimate that the cost of the scheme will be about £5M in lost property values, as against the likely the profit of £1M, but there is no mention of that in what the Department of Transport and the County Council should have required of a full Cost Benefit Analysis. A full Cost Utility Analysis, giving a financial cost to the effects of the scheme on health and wellbeing of occupants, as well as the impact on property values, would of course give an even higher figure than £5M.

We believe the previous Minister to have been badly advised by his officials, both as to the complete costs and benefits of the proposal and of its implications over a ten year period, and that the current Minister should not make a decision on the passenger traffic proposal until Network Rail has been required to make explicit its plans for freight.