

Dear all,

Planes... As your ward councillor, I was recently invited to the opening of the airport's new Public Transport Interchange – the smart new drop-off point for buses, taxis, and the ever-popular “mum and dad service”! It's an impressive addition. With plenty of bus bays, there's real potential for more passengers to travel to and from the airport without adding to congestion on the A38.

Did you know? A full bus can take up to 52 cars off the road. The airport is promising more bus connections, and I'll be keeping an eye on how this develops. We all know how congested the A38 is and how this affects us as a community, so it's encouraging to see investment in public transport at such a busy gateway to our region.

...and Trains... Six years ago, I made the personal decision to stop flying. In a previous job, I travelled by air quite a bit, and when I looked at my carbon footprint, I realised I'd already used far more than my “fair share”. I learnt that short international flights are calculated at around 250kg of CO₂ per hour, making the carbon cost of a flight from Bristol to Barcelona 562kg of CO₂. The same journey by train produces just 11.9kg of CO₂ – a huge difference which prompted a serious rethink about how I travelled. Since then, I've rediscovered the joy of train travel – watching the scenery change, stretching my legs, and arriving right in the heart of a city instead of miles away. It's now how I visit family in the Netherlands, and our choice for holidays further afield.

People are often surprised at how straightforward – and affordable – it can be. Last year, we bought a 4-day Interrail Flexi Pass for about £215 (passes for more days are available). This lets you travel on any four days within a 30-day period, each covering 24 hours of unlimited journeys. UK trains on your departure and return days are included, as is the Eurostar for a £30 seat reservation. All in, our four days of travel – including the Eurostar – came to about £275, roughly £70 per travel day. That's about the same as an average Eurostar return ticket, but with much more travel packed in.

You can get surprisingly far in a day. We once travelled from Toulouse back to Bristol in one stretch, via Paris and London. Other times, we've built in stopovers – a night in Paris on the way out, or a four-day break in the Pyrenees on the way home – and those pauses often become the most memorable parts of the holiday. From next year, new sleeper trains across Europe will make even more adventures possible – imagine boarding in the evening and waking up in a new country!

“If you have the time and enjoy the journey as much as the destination, travelling by train can be a real pleasure – with a few surprises along the way.”

Of course, train travel isn't for everyone. But for those who can and have the time, it offers a rewarding, relaxing way to explore, with the bonus of stepping straight into the heart of your destination. Sadly, by the time you read this, the holidays will be long behind us, and I'll be hard at work again as your ward councillor – but at least the memories will linger still...

With best wishes

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