

Why this train will never arrive

PRESSURE groups bang on and on about restoring a rail connection between Barnstaple and Bideford when anyone in contact with reality can see that it can never be viable.

They should consider the old maxim, "only fight the battles you stand a reasonable chance of winning" and put all their efforts into getting the Tarka Line upgraded.

With millions spent on getting the Okehampton to Exeter line reopened, a new Okehampton station now being built and Crediton now having two trains an hour, North Devon is clearly the poor relation. We have old, overcrowded trains running on outdated infrastructure.

Only recently the line was closed again, resulting in crowds of wet, sad-looking people waiting for their bus replacement service at Barnstaple station.

There are plenty of groups, supposedly advocates for the area's transport — Tarka Rail Association, Railfuture, North Devon Line - Rail Promotion Group and, hopefully, North Devon District Council.

It's about time they stood up to the plate and justified their existence. Or should they wake up and smell the coffee? Who cares? We just want something done!

Tim Gibbs
Bideford

Back on track

HOWEVER much we appreciate the coverage of the beleaguered Tarka Line and its long-suffering passengers, we are getting heartily sick and tired of the same old woefully out-of-date photo by David Smith being dragged out time and again.

Not only are many of the line's problems much to do with it being mostly single track, yet your obsolete photo shows an extremely rare section of double track, the type of train shown last ran on the line in the previous decade and has all been scrapped apart from a handful saved by enthusiasts on some heritage railways — at Great Torrington, for example.

The British Transport Police has a code for us to report issues — 61016 — will you now please apply it. Having seen it (the rubbish photo), I've said it, now it's for you to sort it!

The irony is that the Tarka Line being one of the country's great scenic railways is by no means short of photographs to choose from — and preferably recent ones!

Rog Laker

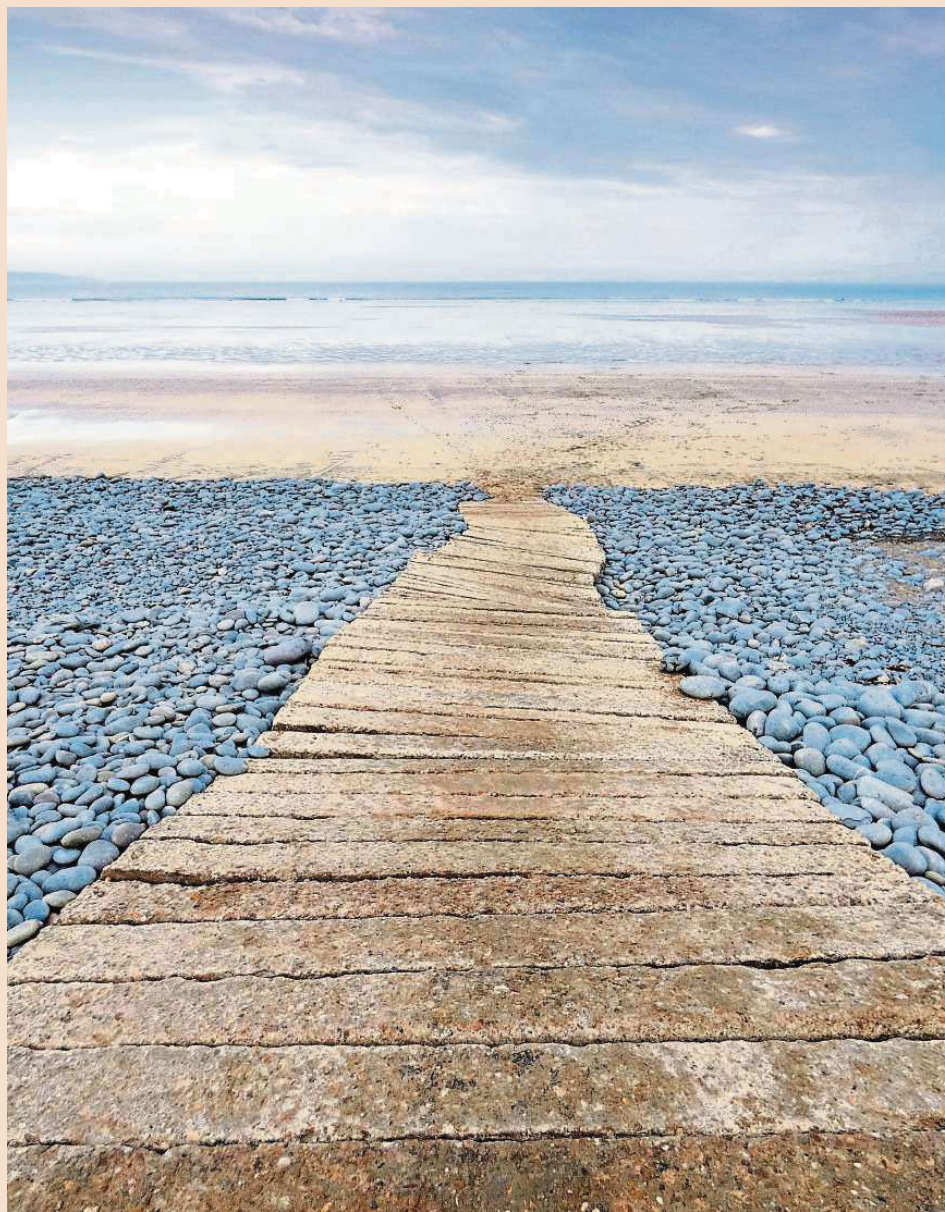
Rein in alarmism

IN a lead letter last month, councillor Thomas expressed his concern that a letter from Susan R Ball had understated the threat from climate change.

He fully supported the fears of "climate breakdown" and more extreme weather.

According to a report just released, fear of climate change significantly

Coast is clear



Photographer Graham Hobbs takes the long view at Westward Ho!

impacts mental health causing distress, anxiety and sadness particularly among young people. How much is due to the relentless stoking of those fears by the media, particularly the BBC.

In fact it was one of the areas of concern in the recent dossier of bias currently being assessed by all parties concerned.

Bill Gates has been a committed supporter of action against global warming but he no longer believes that there is any risk of an "imminent existential emergency".

He thinks the alarmism should be toned down and that "focusing on optimism and practical solutions is a more effective way to motivate ac-

tion". He wants "a pragmatic long term approach centered on innovation and human development".

Much has been made of extreme weather. In many people's lifetime the country experienced the winter of 1947, the winter of 1963, the summer of 1976 and the great storm of 1987.

So what is new apart from the Met Office relying on substandard weather stations with up to five per cent error levels, naming routine storms and selective use of weather data. Extreme variability has always been the main feature of this country's weather.

Precipitous net zero policies promoting national renewable energy

at any price results in huge damage as businesses become uneconomic and shed jobs. People's current and future financial well being is damaged and eroded. It has been reported that Energy bad debts will hit £6 billion next year.

The health report mentioned above found that for those suffering mental distress due to climate concerns "engaging in climate action obviates distress and fosters a sense of control and community". In reality it is not possible for humans to control climate. People break down, not climate. We should rein in the alarmism.

Tony Martin
South Molton

Pay and dismay

I AM a regular user of the public car park at North Devon District Hospital as I work on the mobile MRI scanner at the site.

I have received two spurious parking charge notices (PCN) alleging that I have not paid for parking during my shifts worked on 08/10/25 and 05/11/25.

Not only have I paid, but I have kept the receipts as proof of purchase for my records. I do not seek assistance for myself as I am able to lodge appeals against falsely raised PCNs targeting me, but I sense a wider problem that may be affecting others.

I doubt that all of the people using the car park are keeping their receipts as proof of purchase and therefore able to contest these wrongly issued PCNs. I have at least one other colleague who has received a wrongfully issued PCN with a receipt kept as proof of payment to challenge, but I am not aware of the wider scale of the problem.

I have a sense that it is a much wider issue, with many car park users receiving wrongly issued PCNs at the hospital who due to age, poor health or lack of understanding may not keep a receipt or may be scared by the intimidatory language used on the PCN and elect to pay the penalty rather than challenge it.

I am now very concerned that these are not one-off troubles with the ANPR parking system operated by GroupNexus at North Devon District Hospital, but a wider systemic problem that wrongly issues PCNs (seemingly at random) even to those who have paid for their parking and have the means to prove it.

I am greatly troubled that this company is using threatening and legalistic language to intimidate people who have paid for their parking into paying the PCN as well.

Chris Patient

Budget blow

I LISTENED with interest to the Chancellor declare she had chosen "security for family finances" in her Budget statement.

I wholeheartedly disagree. This was another refusal to lessen the enormous financial strain of dementia on families. We are veteran Army medics. Avril has a rare form of dementia and receives day care from The Filo Project, a non-profit community interest company that sees paid hosts welcome small groups into their home for the day.

Quality, personalised care like this is not a convenience, it's a lifeline.

We support Filo's campaign to end an unfair tax anomaly that forces CICs to charge families VAT on essential day care. The Budget was a missed opportunity to fix this unfair VAT rule. It would cost the government next to nothing but mean the world to families like ours.

Drs Michael and Avril Staunton
Bridgwater