



PROJECTS: Prime Minister Boris Johnson doing pull-ups on the chassis of a Routemaster bus during a visit to Wrightbus, Co Antrim in 2016

'Boris Burrow' is yet another of Johnson's vanity projects

EVERY prime minister wants to leave a legacy. Unfortunately some may have wished they hadn't.

Tony Blair insisted on the Millennium Dome, David Cameron managed to call the disastrous Brexit referendum and Theresa May will always be known for her terrible dancing (as well as introducing a hostile environment policy during her time in the Home Office which effectively led to the Windrush scandal).

But no prime minister has been as obsessed by ludicrous vanity projects as Boris Johnson. As mayor of London, his schemes cost taxpayers around \$940 million.

His proposed flower-filled Garden Bridge from London's South Bank to the Temple cost taxpayers \$43 million – around four-fifths of the final \$53.5m total – before it was eventually abandoned.

Plans for 'Boris Island' would have seen an airport built in the River Thames Estuary in a key conservation area for birds.

Thankfully, the airport commission dismissed the plan in 2014.

In 2011, he bought three water cannons without clearing it first with then home secretary Theresa May. The cannons were later sold for scrap.

Five further projects went ahead but all turned out to be far more costly than initially promised.

The new Routemaster bus; hire bikes; the Emirates Air Line cable car; the conversion of the Olympic stadium and the ArcelorMittal Orbit helter-skelter had a combined cost of more than \$900m.

In one week, the cable car attracted the grand total of four commuters.

Rather than reflecting on the failure of these schemes, his political rise has only given him more encouragement.

If Mr Johnson knows the meaning of the phrase 'white elephant', he's not letting on.

The small matter of a global pandemic

Claire SIMPSON



and the ongoing Brexit mess haven't curtailed his plans. In fact, the worse things seem to get, the more he clings to the fantasies of a petty dictator.

First it was a bridge between the north and Scotland. Then, when everyone with an engineering degree said it was a ridiculous idea, he's now reportedly in favour of a 25-mile under-sea tunnel between Larne and Stranraer.

The tunnel has been dubbed the 'Boris Burrow', a great name for fans of alliteration, but it does conjure up unpleasant images of Boris tunnelling, mole-like, for miles and popping up in Larne when we least expect it.

Obviously there are no moles in Ireland so we'd have to designate him as an invasive

species and send him back to Stranraer.

Terrible jokes aside, the tunnel idea does seem destined to go the way of Boris's other vanity projects.

The idea has been proposed by the High Speed Rail Group (HSRG) which claims the tunnel would bring the north closer to Britain and would "address problems in (the) economic status of Northern Ireland post-Brexit".

Given the Northern Ireland Protocol hasn't even been operating for two months it seems a stretch to propose that a tunnel, which would likely take many years to finish, will have any effect on whether Wayfair will eventually agree to deliver my lamp.

HSRG's pitch claims the proposal has the backing of the Northern Ireland assembly and the Scottish parliament – which will come as a surprise to both administrations – and there is a "feasible path to its funding from the UK Exchequer that does not adversely impact on other transport funding".

I suppose they would say that wouldn't they?

Far be it for me to pour cold water on the plans but there's so many flaws in them it's hard to know where to start.

Infrastructure is a devolved matter so the assembly would have to agree.

We're still talking about building the much cheaper and actually viable Narrow Water bridge, decades after it was first proposed.

Even Simon Hoare, who seems much too sensible to be a Tory MP, told those behind the plan to "concentrate on making the protocol work and put the hallucinogenics down".

The idea of a tunnel is ridiculous and an obvious attempt to distract attention from rows over the protocol.

But why stop there?

Let's give Boris what he really wants – a giant statue of himself beside Churchill in Parliament Square. At least that wouldn't cost \$10 billion.

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ON THIS DAY

FEBRUARY 17 1921

Slaughter on a Train

NEWS of a train ambush at Upton, County Cork, resulting in the death of nine people, was received in Cork yesterday. The train carried a large number of civilian passengers and about forty military. As it was slowing down into Upton Station fire was opened from both sides of the line. The soldiers jumped out and returned fire. Eight civilians, including a woman, were killed, six of the victims being passengers on the train and two members of the attacking party.

Lloyd George Suppresses Cork Report

Editorial
Mr Lloyd George met the challenges of Mr Asquith [former PM] and Mr J H Thomas [Labour] at Westminster yesterday with the truculence associated with the parliamentary performances of Sir Hamar Greenwood. The ex-Premier referred to the non-publication of the Strickland Report into the burning of Cork in December 1920. The Premier intimated that the famous Report would not be published at all. Nothing in the history of the British Parliament was more disgusting than his efforts to explain away this burking of a State document for which all the world had been waiting. Mr Lloyd George's subterfuges were... contemptible.

Lord Buckmaster, an ex-Lord Chancellor, said: 'It was now pretty plain that the forces of the Crown deliberately burnt down public and private buildings in Cork... why is not that Report our property? There was only one conceivable reason why it was not published and that was because it condemned the Government.'

Derry Prison Escape

The Derry police are scouring the city for Francis Carly, Sligo, the untied political prisoner who escaped from Derry Prison on Tuesday morning. An examination of the prison shows that the escape was exceedingly daring. An iron bar on the window of the cell had been sawn through and a rope enabled the prisoner to gain the top of the Jail wall.

North Antrim Mass-goers Searched

On Sunday the people who attended Mass at Loughguile [County Antrim] were held up on emerging from the church by a number of police who searched all the members, even old men and women.

On Sunday evening a number of little boys were engaged playing football near Magherahoney Catholic Church when the field was surrounded by police and all the players were placed against the hedge and searched. Nothing incriminating was found. (Lloyd George's decision to suppress the official report on the burning of Cork was condemned by the London Times as 'equivalent to a confession'. The Report condemned the Auxiliaries. Both Lord Northcliffe, owner of the Times, and CP Scott, editor of the Manchester Guardian and close to Lloyd George, now condemned the PM's coercive Irish policy.)

EDITED BY ÉAMON PHOENIX
e.phoenix@irishnews.com