Barry Clasper’s donations to RNLI stations

Bridge. “An awful lot of mileage, paint and canvas but hopefully to help raise awareness of the work carried out by all of the volunteers,” said Barry. He said the response so far has been “all good.” As the paintings were for the crew, the best buzz I get is hearing their response,” he revealed. “As for his very personal donation to the RNLI, Barry’s project has been “all good”. There’s serial underinvestment in transport north of Manchester, and whenever savings are necessary then it’s our region that feels the pinch.

I hope this body of work highlights their bravery and that the public recognise the images in the RNLI shops don’t portray the reality of the dangers in the sea.

Barry Clasper

He said he hoped his project would lead to increased recognition of the volunteers of the RNLI, and the St Abbs crew. “The RNLI have had a lot of bad press over the last few years,” he said. “The FC Brigade and sending donations abroad have made tabloid headlines, but politics have to be ignored as the crew still risks their lives daily. The attention should be on their bravery. Donate direct to the station in your area and make the crew realise their worth to the local community.” As for his very personal donation to the RNLI, Barry’s project has come at considerable cost to himself.

I was shocked to read that the latest estimates now see it costing upwards of £100bn for completion, and stopping at Manchester and Leeds. What didn’t shock me were recent calls to save money by cutting planned connections to Leeds and hence Newcastle.

The council has serial underinvestment in transport north of Manchester, and whenever savings are necessary then it’s our region that feels the pinch. We are invisible to London-based transport planners, and as soon as their plans hit the buffers, we are first to be jettisoned to try to balance their books.

Barry Clasper is a Philosophy and Art graduate with a career in graphic design. He is also a member of the Art Group at the University of Northumbria.

Visit: www.clasperart.com

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We must cross the bridges and invest in public transport

Paul Benneworth

I living in Norway is an incredible experience being in its capital city, Oslo, which is Europe’s rainiest city, the prices are astronomical and the day length is disorienting, but they’re not the hardest things to come to terms with. Norway is stunningly beautiful, and is a land of high mountains, sheer cliffs, glaciers and deep fjords. But that makes it a very difficult country to get around.

The big cities may be just a hundred miles apart as the crow flies. But this geography makes every journey an epic adventure. Norway uses air and ferry travel to bind the country together. But there’s a realisation that these sectors’ reliance on dirty fuel oil means a greater need for electrified car and rail transport.

The snow-capped mountains may be beautiful, but it’s impossible to build roads over them. The fjords break every coastal intercity trip, making a network of car ferries vital to bridge the gaps.

Tax breaks and road toll exemptions have driven the highest rate of electrical car sales in Europe. But the Norwegian government realised shifting to clean energy means finding more efficient ways through the fjords and mountains.

They’ve recently invested tens of billions of pounds in a high-technology infrastructure linking the country together. The flagship is the Rogfas tunnel, going 16 miles underneath the Bokne Fjord reaching a depth of 390m below sea-level.

Building the tunnel involves excavating more than 8.5m cubic metres of rock - disposing of that rock is a huge engineering challenge. Ground was broken in 2018, and the tunnel will open to the public in 2026.

But what most surprised me was its moderate price tag. The total cost is roughly £1.5bn, which sounds a lot at first, but not when you compare it to British infrastructure projects, particularly the ill-starred High Speed 2 rail project.

When I worked at Newcastle, we had a small project to calculate the potential benefits of high-speed rail linking London to the North and Scotland. We had assumed that it would cost - like Rogfast - a few billions to build an entirely new set of rail lines linking London, Glasgow and Newcastle.

Benneworth is a Professor in Western Norwegian University of Applied Science and lives occasionally in Whitley Bay.