EDITORIAL

28TH NOVEMBER 2007

Has time travel arrived in Cyprus?
Or am I simply 'confused of Lania'?

Reading the Cyprus Weekly of November 23-29, 2007, my eye was caught by the headline: Dual-carriageway could replace deadly road. The piece, talking about the proposed new Limassol – Saittas highway, states that at Tuesdays session at the House Communications Committee, committee members Yiannakis Thoma and Aristos Chrysostomou spoke of the need for an entirely new solution – namely a dual carriageway that would shorten the distance by some 35 minutes and drastically reduce the risk of traffic accidents.

At present it takes 25 minutes to drive (within the speed limit) from Limassol roundabout to Saittas fruit market. So with the new road cutting 35 minutes off the journey time, we will shortly be arriving in Saittas 10 minutes before we left! That is truly revolutionary and the local planners are to be congratulated for their ground-breaking work.

But there is a catch. The article goes on: The current road to Saittas, which usually takes about an hour from the Limassol exit, is widely known as being one of the most dangerous on the island mainly because it has many sharp bends. There is no denying there are plenty of bends on the mountain roads but one hour to get from Limassol to Saittas? Is that by donkey?

It gets worse. The current road is 30Kms long whilst the plans for the new duel carriageway would reduce the distance by 6kms. I clocked the distance at 27.5kms and I was not cutting corners honest!

Confused yet? I know I am! Fortunately, a local politician comes to the rescue: 'Imagine how much money the mountain residents in the area would save if the distance from Limassol was 25 minutes instead of 50 minutes', said Alassa community leader Savvas Savva. So now we are saving just 25 minutes. Thanks for explaining that!

I was so disturbed by the mathematics of the politicians (reported without question by journalists) that I conducted an amateur, thoroughly unscientific time trial on the Limassol-Saittas road and I can confirm that in my car it is 27.5kms long and takes 25 minutes. By my schoolboy maths my average speed was around 55kms/hr, which sounds about right when you consider that the speed limit varies from 30 to 80kms/hr.

Now if you deduct the 6kms saved by the new straighter road from the current bendy length of 27.5kms, you get a 21.5kms new highway, or 30kms and 24Kms respectively if you believe the press report. Assuming the new roads' speed limit is 100kms/hr (after the initial 2kms of existing duel carriageway that is limited to 50kms/hr) you might expect to travel at an average speed of 90kms/hr. So you will get a journey time of 14 or 16 minutes respectively. Let's call it about 15 minutes on the average journey.

So there you have it: Instead of the 25 minutes journey to Saittas, it will probably be nearer 15, representing a saving of 10 minutes. Will this save the mountain villages?

I am not a mathematician (so please let me know if my sums are wrong), nor a planner or politician. I don't own land along the route or plan to build a golf club or run an estate agency. I simply expect the press to check the facts. Is that too much to ask? People who know me will confirm I am not one to let the facts get in the way of a good story. That may be acceptable in after dinner anecdotes or bar talk but please journalists, please can we have some in-depth, accurate and balanced reporting, particularly on this most important issue.

The Editor