LETTER S

Exit removal

hushed up
SIR — I am in agreement with
Dr James Johnson's comments
regarding British Airways' re-
moval of overwing exits on its
Boeing 747-100s and -200s
(Flight International, 8-14 May).
At the time of their removal,
1 was a BA cabin crewmember
working on these aircraft and 1
wrote to our crew newspaper
voicing my disquiet. My letter
was not printed, the explanation
being that outside interests had
access to our in-house publica-
tions and such "alarmist" talk
from crewmembers would give
the newspapers a "field day".
1 also asked to know the
financial gain from the extra
eight economy seats per aircraft.
1 pointed out that the overwing
exits in the Manchester 737
incident had saved many lives.
1 never received a satisfactory
answer. In the event, the work
was done. The two crew take-off
seats in the removed door-area
became most unpopular and,
indeed, were nicknamed the
50% scats (draw your own con-
clusions).
No matter how much BA
claims that safety is always para-
mount, it does not seem to be
quite as paramount as it was
before privatisation. The com-
mercial exigencies on the airline
industry in general are, of
course, partly to blame (witness
the widespread use of two-man
crews and twin-engined aircraft
on long-haul oceanic routes —
but that's another story).
As long as the general flying
public remains in ignorance of
basic safety considerations and,
moreover, appears unconcerned
about them — provided the
"price is right" — such prac-
tices will continue.
In the "bad old days" BOAC
and BEA were accused of being
nothing more than a large flying
club run for the benefit of its
"old boys". Nowadays, BA —
together with most of its na-
tional and international compe-
titors — is run by accountants
lor the benefit of "plus ca
change".
HILARY STEVENSON
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South Africa's Wonderair operates at least three Turbo DC-Js

South Africa soups up DC-3s
SIR — 1 read with interest the
article on the Basler Turbo DC-
3 in the 24-30 April issue of
Flight International.
The picture above is of a
DC-3 Turbo conversion at Pre-
toria, South Africa, owned by a
company called Wonderair.
These conversions are made
on the airfield and the company

has at least three Turbo DC-3s
in service. Wonderair also oper-
ates two DC-6 freighters — one
of which can be seen in the
background.
ROGER KUNERT

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Support your
local airport...

SIR —The editorial "Local diffi-
culties" (Flight International, 24-
30 April) urges that Govern-
ment restrictions should be ap-
plied to protect those airports
that have potentially useful run-
way capacity from being lost to
non-aviation developments.
Such protection would ensure
that these assets are retained.
The UK is on the brink of
massive new marketing poten-
tial as the trading benefits of a
free Europe open up. Exploiting
a liberalised European market
will generate opportunities for
regional/short-haul carriers, as
the need emerges for additional
economical, fast, accessible, no-
fuss means of transport.
If air transport is to be viable
and a preferred alternative to
the Channel tunnel, immediate
attention must be applied to the
social benefits that enhanced
regional services will provide.
London City Airport has
demonstrated how well a short
runway can integrate regional
air services into a community
and provide it with an asset. As
you indicate, runways exist
today that could well be incor-
porated into the air-transport
infrastructure of tomorrow. The
south-east of England, with its
high population and corre-

spondingly high level of indus-
try and commerce, would be
the source of much of tomor-
row's "Eurotraffic" and it is in
the south-east that many poten-
tially useful runways exist.
The past years have seen
many businesses decentralise
from London as city properly
prices have soared, placing
themselves amid the massive
swathe of industry and com-
merce that encompasses our
capital city. Is it logical that
regional "bus-stop" services
within this swathe should be
concentrated upon the highly-
priced prestige runways of BAA
when many operational, all-
weather runways exist within
this catchment area?
If BAA was to price regional
carriers out of Heathrow and
Gatwick, where would they go?
Would they simply cease to
exist and consequently bereave
the public of a valuable service?
Would we have to wait until
then before realising that alter-
natives must be found? Europe
will see the dawning of an age
of increased opportunity, and
maybe a new chapter in this
country's air-travel story. If this
chapter is to be written, now is
the time to lay its foundation.
PETER BROWN

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... and keep up
development
SIR —Your leading article
(Flight International, 24-30
April) on the UK Government's
proposals to force local authori-
ties to sell off their airports
needs to be corrected. Virtually
all the regional airports run at
a profit. Whereas the local com-
munity can decide to plough
back these profits to update its
airport, the Government's pro-
posals could well bring the de-
velopment of Britain's airports
to a halt.
Because airports are capital-
intensive, virtually none of
them returns 12% on net assets.
Most of them, in fact, trade at
less than their asset values and
are, therefore, prime targets for
asset-stripping property devel-
opers.
IAN CRAN
AIRPORT CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Gloucestershire Airport
Staverton
Cheltenham
Glos GL51 6SR, UK

WHAT'S ON

Institute of Safety and Systems Man-
agement 3-14 June, Aircraft Accident
Investigation, University of Southern
California, Los Angeles, CA; tel: +1
(213) 740 3995.

No 56(F) Squadron 75th Anniversary
7-9 June, Ex-members who wish to
attend should contact Sqn Ldr M F
Killen. No 56(F) Squadron, Royal Air
Force, Wattisham, Ipswich, Suffolk,
IP7 7RA.

Cosford Air Show 9 June, Cosford
Air Show. Wolverhampton, West
Midlands WV7 3EX. Credit card
bookings tel: +44 (0898) 122999.
Shephard Conferences 10-11 June,
The Fighter Helicopter Conference &
Exhibition, Paris, 29-30 Augus t
Street. Burnham, Bucks SL1 7JZ, UK;
tel: +44 (0628) 604 311; fax: +44
(0628) 664 334.
London Society of Air-Britain 12
June, Jet Profelled file and The Glos-
ter Story by Derek James, 19.00,
Holbor n Central Library, 32-3 8
Teobalds Road, London UK; tel: Char-
les Oman, +44 (0444) 811317.
Eurocae 1991 General Assembly 24-
25 June, "System Validation'1

, Amster-
dam, Netherlands. Contact: General
Secretariat, Eurocae, 11, rue Hamelin
•—75783, Paris, Cedex 16, France; tel:
+45 057188; fax: +45 530393.
RAF International Air Tattoo 20-21
July, "Global Tiger Squadron Meet",
RAF Fairford, Glos. Contact: Sue
Bushell, IAT Officer, International Air
Tattoo, Building 1108, RAF Fairford.
Glos GL7 4DL, UK; tel: +44 (0285)
713 300; fax: +44 (0285) 713 268.

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