

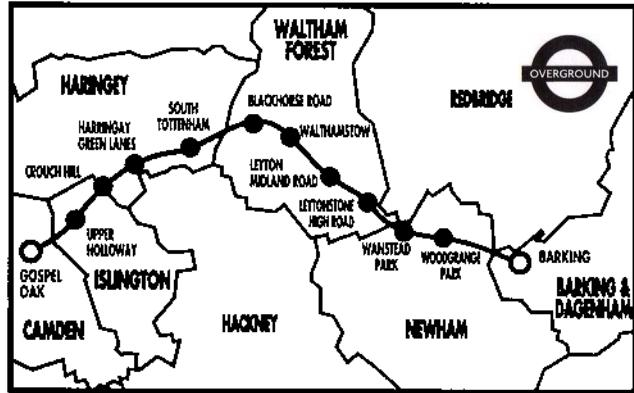
BARKING – GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

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NEWS RELEASE

6th January 2012

TfL FARES UP – BUT HOPES DASHED FOR CRUSHED PASSENGERS!

**Mayor raises fares while condemning local
Overground passengers to wait in the rain for packed
rush hours trains**

As the latest fares increases hit passengers, a local rail users group asked the Mayor for a New Year's resolution to improve the travelling conditions for passengers on the Barking – Gospel Oak Line.

With the post Christmas and New Year trudge back to work, colleges and schools under way for local commuters, some had not only another New Year fares increase to contend with. Many Overground passengers also have the never ending prospect of wet, windswept platforms and crush loaded peak trains as neither Government nor Mayor Boris Johnson and Transport for London (TfL) have any plans for further investment in a vital London orbital rail route.

The Barking – Gospel Oak Line Users Group (BGOLUG)¹ says that while new buses, longer commuter trains may improve some passengers' journeys now, and major schemes like Thameslink and Crossrail should improve journeys in the long term for many others, the latest round of rail investment, announced just before Christmas², yet again ignored the essential work needed on the Barking – Gospel Oak Line. Unbelievably there were no plans to electrify the 12-mile line.

BGOLUG Secretary Richard Pout said, "The impasse over further investment in the Barking – Gospel Oak Line is immensely frustrating. The Government and the Mayor have been in deadlock for the last 3½ years with each insisting the other is responsible for paying for electrification of the line³."



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Passengers will have to continue to cram into inadequate 2-coach diesel trains⁴, which although only a year old, don't have enough carriages to carry all the passengers needing to travel in the peak hours.

Britain's only surviving train maker, Bombardier, has just been given a lifeline contract for 130 new coaches for Southern trains operating out of Victoria. A TfL order for 8 diesel coaches⁵ or preferably 24 new electric ones for an electrified Barking – Gospel Oak Line and the Clapham Junction extension of the East London Line could have helped boost job security at the Derby plant.

"Meanwhile £multi-billion Government schemes are being added to the "Network Rail Credit Card", a loan finance arrangement, as it is referred to in the industry. None of it will benefit our passengers or cross-London international freight."

The extension of the East London Line to Clapham Junction is the only current ongoing investment for the London Overground network.

As well as the need for more coaches, there have been no new passenger shelters provided on the Barking – Gospel Oak Line over the last five years, despite the vast increase in passenger numbers since 2007. Also late evening trains still only run every half an hour and are often overcrowded due to the infrequent service⁶.

"BGOLUG is urging Mayor Boris to make a New Year's Resolution to break this deadlock over electrification with the Government. This should end the overcrowding and poor conditions endured by our passengers in the rush hours", said Richard Pout.



The 08:12 to Gospel Oak is packed at Leytonstone High Road on 18/10/2011. [photo Glenn Wallis/BGOLUG] This photograph may be reproduced.



Passengers struggle to board the 08:44 to Gospel Oak at Leyton Midland Road on 11/10/2011. [photo Glenn Wallis/BGOLUG] This photograph may be reproduced.

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Formed as the Barking – Kentish Town Line Committee to fight Dr. Beeching's closure proposals in the 1960s, the Barking – Gospel Oak Line User Group has continued to represent the line's passengers and campaign for improved services and station facilities, and also for the electrification of the only non-electrified railway in North East London.
2. In addition to the London – Bristol/Cardiff and Manchester – Liverpool electrifications, Crossrail and new trains for Thameslink, Government have now announced the electrification of the Manchester – Leeds/Bradford route and more new trains for commuters south of the Thames.
3. Meanwhile, there are no plans to electrify the 12-mile Barking – Gospel Oak Line or associated freight sidings at Barking for Channel Tunnel freight trains or at the new London Gateway container port at Thames Haven. The rail industry reaffirmed the urgent need to electrify the Barking – Gospel Oak route several times last year with the publication of Network Rail's second *London & South East Route Utilisation Strategy*, TfL's submission to the DfT for the second High Level Output Specification and the *Initial Industry Plan 2011*, initiated by the recent McNulty report. There has been no progress on electrification since negotiations on funding between the Mayor and the then Secretary of State broke down in 2008.
4. Following the transfer of responsibility for the former Silverlink Metro services from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2006, Transport for London, let the London Rail Concession to London Overground Rail Operations Ltd (LOROL), a joint Hong Kong/German owned venture, to operate the London Overground network from November 2007 until March 2014, with the option of an extension to early March 2016. As part of the London Rail Concession contract let by TfL, LOROL undertook to order, in conjunction with rail leasing company Angel Trains, 8x2-car Class 172 Turbostar diesel multiple units from the former British Rail Engineering plant at Derby, now owned by Bombardier Transportation. Delivery of these trains took place in mid 2010.
5. The current 8 diesel 2-coach trains could be lengthened by at least one new coach built by Bombardier at Derby. Some work to adapt platforms would be required, especially at South Tottenham. Even if the line were subsequently electrified and electric trains introduced, many of the country's train operating companies would welcome the displaced diesel trains.
6. This is illustrated by an extract from a member's recent email (27th November 2011), "Thought best way to come home was to get the 43 bus and then 23.09 from Upper Holloway rather than via Victoria Line to Blackhorse Road solely to get a seat on the train. Granted it was on the ½hour timetable then but it was packed when it got to Upper Holloway even though it's the first stop after Gospel Oak and this only increased during the journey to Barking."

