



BARKING – GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

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BARKING – GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP E-BULLETIN 17 JULY 2012 HLOS 2014 – 2019 SPECIAL EDITION

NO ELECTRIFICATION AGAIN!

Secretary Greening ignores vital “infill” electrification scheme, claiming it is Mayor Boris Johnson’s responsibility, yet he claims it is hers!

It was with a sense of incredulity that BGOLUG officers listened to Secretary of State Justine Greening’s statement in Parliament and read the associated documents on the Department of Transport’s (DfT) website yesterday.

The much awaited £9bn High Level Output Specification (HLOS) that Ms. Greening announced, included hundreds of miles of railway electrification but made no mention of the electrification of the 12-mile Barking – Gospel Oak Line. This was in spite of the recommendations of Mayor Johnson, Transport for London (TfL) and the rail industry, including Network Rail and rail freight operators.

Long time BGOLUG supporter, Islington North MP Jeremy Corbyn was so surprised he asked Ms. Greening if the line was to be electrified and was told that it was a matter for TfL and was not included in the HLOS.

During the day it emerged that TfL had advised the Labour Deputy Chair of the London Assembly Transport Committee, Val Shawcross, that during the recent negotiations on HLOS, TfL were summarily told that improvements to orbital routes such as the Barking – Gospel Oak Line were their responsibility to fund and manage. Despite TfL’s protestations about moving the goal posts at such a late stage, the DfT officials refused to reconsider.

All this is at odds with pronouncements by Mayor Boris Johnson who continues to maintain that Barking – Gospel Oak electrification is the DfT’s and Justine Greening’s responsibility!

On 29th June the Mayor wrote to the Chair of the Assembly Transport Committee, Liberal Democrat Caroline Pidgeon,

“The economic appraisal of Gospel Oak to Barking electrification has been undertaken by Network Rail. The “Network Route Utilisation Strategy, Electrification” published by Network Rail in October 2009 showed a benefit:cost ratio for the scheme of 2.4:1, which is high value for money under DfT appraisal rules.

Funding for the electrification is a matter for the DfT but I have lobbied, and will continue to actively lobby for this.”

Also in June, TfL wrote to Assembly Chair Jennette Arnold OBE,

“.....demand for the Gospel Oak to Barking service has grown very strongly; in 2010 we introduced the new class 172 trains, with a capacity one third higher than the original rolling stock, and in 2011 we doubled the frequency to 4 trains per hour. We have also squeezed in an extra AM peak train, but have reached the maximum frequency we can achieve and trains are now as crowded as they were before we doubled the service in 2011.

Our recommendations to the government for the next High Level Output Specification, published in August 2011, included electrification of the line and 4-car electric trains, which was reiterated in the Mayor's Rail Vision in February 2012, and in meetings with DfT officials. Network Rail recommended the scheme as part of the core electrification strategy in the Network Route Utilisation Strategy, Electrification in October 2009, and recommended that the scheme should be "prioritised for delivery in Control Period 5 (2014 to 2019)" in the Initial Industry Plan in September 2011. Electrification and longer trains were also recommended in the London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy, December 2010.

However, it remains the case that the most significant beneficiary of electrification is UK-wide freight traffic, and DfT should be progressing this scheme. As extra capacity is needed sooner rather than later, and because of the risk that electrification may not happen in the next Control Period (2014 to 2019), TfL is actively progressing 3-car diesel trains on the line. To that end we have recently published a "Periodic indicative notice" in the Official Journal of the European Union seeking expressions of interest from rolling stock suppliers."

TfL must have been aware that the DfT was not supporting electrification by early May this year since it issued the notice in the European Journal on 16th May.

BGOLUG Secretary Richard Pout said, "We are now in the bizarre situation where a Conservative Secretary of State cannot agree with a recently re-elected Conservative Mayor how to fund a small infill electrification scheme, which the whole rail industry views as essential and which will benefit both TfL as it will be able to run one homogeneous fleet of electric trains on the whole London Overground network and the rail freight industry."

The Rail Freight Group Conference was told on 29th May that while 49% of freight train kilometres were currently run under the electrified wires, only 11% could be electrically hauled from end to end. With the then approved electrification schemes (Great Western and North West Triangle), it would rise to only 12%. But a programme of infill schemes (including Barking – Gospel Oak) which the industry had been calling for years would lift the total to 53%.

Richard Pout continued, "Thousands of tons of freight are already being carried by the Barking – Gospel Oak Line five days a week and this will only grow as the new Thames Gateway Port at Thames Haven opens in one year's time and more Channel Tunnel freight uses HSI to Barking."

"It is disingenuous of Justine Greening to claim that the electrification of the Barking – Gospel Oak Line is solely a matter for the Mayor. She has been badly briefed by her officials who appear to be more interested in a game of 'one-up-manship' with the Mayor and his officials rather than improving and greening the rail network."

BGOLUG is grateful to Jeremy Corbyn for agreeing to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State to try and resolve this impasse and he will also be approaching other MPs and London Assembly Members through whose constituencies the line runs to see if they wish to be represented. BGOLUG will do all it can to support Jeremy in his efforts.

BGOLUG will be producing a detailed briefing on Barking – Gospel Oak electrification in the near future.

Glenn Wallis
Assistant Secretary
Barking – Gospel Oak Line User Group