



## **BARKING – GOSPEL OAK RAIL USER GROUP**

Chairman: Alderman Frederick Jones, Barking & Dagenham Council  
Vice Chair: Richard H Pout B.Sc. Econ. MILT, (020) 8348 5064, 07970 722991  
Secretary: Glenn Wallis, (020) 8529 2361, 07789 791224

www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk  
info@barking-gospeloak.org.uk



### **BARKING – GOSPEL OAK RAIL USER GROUP eBULLETIN 25 APRIL 2013**

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Apologies for the lengthy interval since the last e-bulletin. This was not due to a lack of news but more because so much has been happening there has been little time to report it! However, it was possible to press release the most newsworthy events.

#### **❖ ELECTRIFICATION LATEST**

##### **◆ TRANSPORT FOR LONDON STARTS TO GET DESPERATE!**

It was a pleasant surprise to find that a fair proportion of the 7<sup>th</sup> March meeting of the London Assembly Transport Committee was spent discussing the electrification of the Barking – Gospel Oak Line! Part of the meeting was a question and answer session with TfL London Rail’s Head of Planning, Geoff Hobbs and Chief Operations Officer (soon to move to Crossrail), Howard Smith. Also attending the session was Network Rail’s Principal Network Planner, Paul Harwood.

Jennette Arnold, Andrew Dismore and Val Shawcross asked a number of questions regarding Barking – Gospel Oak electrification and overcrowding and established that:-

- Procuring new diesel coaches or new diesel trains was now accepted as uneconomic
- Electrification was now seen as the only solution to overcrowding
- TfL had pledged £25m towards electrification works
- The Department for Transport’s (DfT) opposition to electrification had been largely overcome but the Treasury was yet to be convinced. Approval and funding of electrification was included in the Chancellor’s 2012 Autumn Statement but was then removed by the Treasury at the last moment. This happened all over again in the 2013 Budget statement<sup>¶</sup>.
- It was believed that the final outturn cost of electrification would be significantly below the frequently quoted cost of £90m<sup>¶</sup>.

<sup>¶</sup> Confirmed by Transport Commissioner Sir Peter Hendy at the 17<sup>th</sup> April 2013 meeting of the Transport Committee

- Network Rail had agreed with TfL to evaluate the project to GRIP Stage 3 in order to get a clearer understanding of what the actual cost would be. It was very unusual for Network Rail to do this when funding for a project was not in place
- Network Rail was concerned that if Barking – Gospel Oak electrification was not completed by the opening of Crossrail in 2018, costs could escalate and the time the work would take would be extended. This was because the increase in traffic over the Great Eastern Main Line between Forest Gate and Stratford Central Junctions that Crossrail would bring, would cause most of the freight traffic to/from North Thameside to be routed over the Barking – Gospel Oak route, reducing opportunities to carry out electrification works.

This was reported in our press release of 20<sup>th</sup> March ([www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130320\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130320_press_release.pdf)) along with London Assembly Transport Chair Caroline Pidgeon's letter to the Office of Rail Regulation in support of electrification of the line.

### ◆ THE LONDON ASSEMBLY TRANSPORT COMMITTEE PILES IN!

Subsequently Caroline Pidgeon wrote to Chancellor George Osborne asking him to agree funding for the scheme in the Budget. While the Chancellor remained unmoved, Danny Alexander, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, wrote back to Transport Committee Chair ([www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130327\\_Treasury\\_Letter.pdf](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130327_Treasury_Letter.pdf)) & ([www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130410\\_London\\_Assembly\\_Note.pdf](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130410_London_Assembly_Note.pdf)) advising that it might prove possible to consider the scheme again for inclusion in the next spending round in June.

With all the major players in the rail industry whole heartedly supporting electrification, now joined by the DfT, only the Treasury is stopping work actually getting under way. If only some senior Treasury officials had to commute by the Barking – Gospel Oak Line!

### ❖ PIXC-BUSTER EXTENDED TO WILLESDEN JUNCTION



Chiltern's 172 102 stands at Hampstead Heath after working 2J96, the 07:59SX Woodgrange Park – Hampstead Heath PIXC-buster service on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2012.

172 102 was on hire to LOROL, covering for 172 001 which had returned to Bombardier's Derby Works for rectification work to the saloon floors.

The 07:59SX Woodgrange Park has now been extended beyond Hampstead Heath to Willesden Junction. [GW]

Just as in September 2011, when LOROL first quietly slipped 2J96, the 07:59SX Woodgrange Park – Upper Holloway PIXC-buster train into the timetable (see [www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20111101\\_press\\_release.pdf](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20111101_press_release.pdf)), the train's latest extension, it had been terminating at Hampstead Heath since 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011, to Willesden Junction a few weeks ago also went unremarked.

PIXC is a DfT acronym standing for **P**assengers **I**n **eX**cess of **C**apacity, hence the rail industry applying the term PIXC-buster to any train put on to relieve serious overcrowding on existing services.

LOROL agreed to extend their PIXC-buster from Upper Holloway to Hampstead Heath from the 11<sup>th</sup> December 2011 timetable change at BGORUG's request to allow interchange with the North London Line (NLL) as the train could not serve Gospel Oak due to Platform 3 already being occupied. BGORUG had suggested extending the train in service to Willesden Junction then but LOROL could not find a *path* in the timetable for it.

It appears that the *PIXC-buster* was dwelling overlong at Hampstead Heath while the train was cleared of passengers, so it was decided to “liven up” its forward empty stock working to Willesden Junction Low Level. Unfortunately this is not considered sufficiently “robust” for Network Rail to accept its publication in the passenger timetable, so LOROL are making regular applications through Network Rail’s Short Term Planning (STP) process to keep the train in passenger service. Currently platform departure indicators show the train as running to Willesden Junction, but the on-board systems still announce the train as terminating at Hampstead Heath and then switch themselves off! The train is very likely to prove popular with commuters who change onto the westbound NLL as they can get as far as Willesden Junction without having to change trains. The train’s loadings have slowly grown since September 2011 and it is quite likely that by the end of the year it will be as crowded as the other peak trains.

2J96 <i>PIXC-buster</i> schedule		
Woodgrange Park	d.	07:59
Wanstead Park	d.	08:02
Leytonstone High Road	d.	08:05
Leyton Midland Road	d.	08:08
Walthamstow Queen’s Road	d.	08:11
Blackhorse Road	d.	08:14
South Tottenham	d.	08:18
Harringay Green Lanes	d.	08:21
Crouch Hill	d.	08:24
Upper Holloway	d.	08:27
Hampstead Heath	d.	08:34
Finchley Road & Frognal	d.	08:37
West Hampstead	d.	08:39
Brondesbury	d.	08:41
Brondesbury Park	d.	08:42
Kensal Rise	d.	08:44
Willesden Junction	a.	08:49

LOROL’s Mark Eaton told our April meeting that the company’s train planners were trying to find ways to squeeze more *PIXC-busters* out of the small 8-train diesel fleet, but it was not easy without risking Overground’s performance, which was currently among the best in the country. BGORUG hopes to arrange a meeting between some of our officers and Mark and some of his colleagues to seek ways to adapt the existing trains to carry more standing passengers by removing some seats and diagram some additional *PIXC-busters* possibly as Woodgrange Park – Blackhorse Road shuttles.

## ❖ SIGNALS PROBLEM CAUSES REPEAT DISRUPTIONS



**Three of South Tottenham’s signals which have been affected by the recent power failures.**  
**Left:** DB Schenker’s 66088 passes **S24** signal at Leyton Midland Road while working 6L98 Didcot – MoD Shoburyness *gunpowder train* on 11.10.2011. **Centre:** 172 002, forming the 17:50 down approaches **S21** signal at Blackhorse Road on a wet Saturday, 13.04.2013. **Right:** 70000 *Britannia* drifts into Walthamstow Queen’s Road past signal **S23** with the Southend – Salisbury *Catherdrals Express* on 31.08.2011. [All GW]

Services have been disrupted on a number of occasions in recent weeks by power failures affecting signals between South Tottenham and Wanstead Park. It is only 3½ years since this section was resignalled and these regular disruptions are clearly irritating LOROL. At our April meeting, Mark Eaton commented that it was all very well for Network Rail’s technicians to replace the fuses every time they failed but he would appreciate a little more effort going into discovering the root cause of the problem. The power has failed at least three times since, on 14<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April.



The Network Rail signal box, relay room, battery room and LOROL communications equipment room at South Tottenham, 23.11.2008



## ❖ NEW PASSENGER SHELTERS INSTALLED



LOROL has installed two new Macemain shelters at Leyton Midland Road. These two views were taken on a wet Saturday 16.03.2013 shortly after the departure of both up and down trains. Waiting passengers are already occupying the shelters on the down platform. BGORUG is still pressing for full glazing to be restored to the original 1996 shelters. [GW]



**Left:** One of two half shelters installed at Leytonstone High Road seen on 16.03.2013. [GW]

**Right:** The plaque says it all! Leytonstone High Road was the first of six stations to be refurbished under the initiative of the six GOBLLAG (Gospel Oak – Barking Line Local Authority Group) boroughs. The distant shelter in the view of the down platform was installed as part of that scheme in 1996. [GW]

Last autumn Sam Russell, LOROL's Stakeholder & Community Manager, advised that a small surplus in the station improvements budget was being spent on providing additional shelters at four stations on our line. Sam said that BGORUG's persistent complaints about the lack of shelter on stations meant that LOROL were immediately able recommend to TfL that the surplus should be spent on additional shelters at four stations, Leyton Midland Road, Leytonstone High Road, Wanstead Park and Woodgrange Park. Unfortunately there were insufficient funds available to illuminate the shelters like the new ones recently installed at Shepherd's Bush. BGORUG is challenging TfL's assertion that full glazing cannot be restored to the 1996 shelters due to cost, since the work involved is relatively minor. Additional shelters at Harringay Green Lanes are now BGORUG's next priority.

## ❖ PLANS FOR SOUTH TOTTENHAM "FLAWED"!

As has been previously reported, both Blackhorse Road and South Tottenham stations were awarded funding from the DfT's Access for All scheme for provision of step-free access late last year. On 29<sup>th</sup> January both Richard Pout and I attended a site meeting at South Tottenham with LOROL's Sam Russell, Stakeholder & Community Manager and Gareth Biggins, Senior Infrastructure Manager.

TfL's brief to LOROL was to install a lift tower to give step free access to each platform and a ticket gate-line to combat the high proportion of ticketless travel at the station (see [www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130423\\_ST\\_access.pdf](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk/history/20130423_ST_access.pdf)). Given the constrained site, both Richard and I were sceptical that this brief could be achieved. At the site meeting it became obvious that the LOROL representatives also had their doubts. There was just not enough available space to shoe-horn in a lift tower and a gate-line on the existing entrance footpath between the staff cabin and the subway to the westbound platform. All present agreed that the best solution was to acquire the lease of the station's former booking office building from Network Rail and reinstate the original station

entrance. It is understood that this is now the preferred option and the lease will transfer to LOROL in the autumn. It should be possible to locate the gate-line, staff accommodation and even have room for a small refreshments kiosk within the building. This would also allow both the proposed lift towers to be located by the subway without impeding the free flow of passengers.

The original TfL brief specified installing a lift tower and a ticket gate-line between the entrance to the subway (marked by the Oyster reader) and the nearest end of the staff cabin, all on a level surface! Wiser counsels have now prevailed. [GW09.04.2013]



↑ The path to the former booking office is beyond the gate. [GW 09.04.2013]



← The former booking office at South Tottenham some months after its closure in 1992. [BGORUG archive]

## ❖ WORK ACTUALLY STARTS AT WALTHAMSTOW!

Members were recently stunned to discover that work on part of the very long awaited Walthamstow stations pedestrian link had actually started! Work on the footpath from Edison Close across the Walthamstow Central car park still seems some months away but Network Rail approved contractors have made rapid progress in erecting the steps and ramps from the Walthamstow Queen's Road station footbridge to the new entrance in Edison Close. While these are nearly finished, the actual entrance, lighting, Oyster readers, ticket machine and CCTV have all still to be installed. The photos below show how quickly the works have progressed.



The above photos were taken on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2013. [GW]





↑7<sup>th</sup> April 2013.↑



←16<sup>th</sup> April 2013→  
[GW]  
↓



## ❖ BUSES CONTINUE TO REPLACE WEEKEND TRAINS

The incidence of weekend engineering works lessened over the winter but now appears to be ramping up again into the summer. Network Rail have limited recent possessions to start Saturday night and finish by midday Sunday and only cover the eastern or western half of the line although there are some all weekend, all line possessions programmed.

BGORUG had noticed that on some other Overground routes replacement buses were not always provided when engineering works were taking place. When TfL published details of the all-line closure on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> January until 10:00, BGORUG was dismayed to see that no replacement buses were being provided, ticket acceptance being arranged on local London Buses services instead. We quickly made our displeasure known to LOROL who advised that it was TfL policy that replacement buses would not be provided where services were withdrawn for three hours or less. We maintained that on an orbital line like ours, local bus services did not provide adequate replacement and in the short time remaining before the day in question insisted that ticket acceptance be arranged on alternative Overground and Underground routes as well and LOROL agreed to this.

The next non-provision of replacement buses was to be between South Tottenham and Gospel Oak on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> April until 11:00, just one week after replacement buses **had** been provided between Barking and South Tottenham on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> April until 12:15! Representations were made to London TravelWatch and London Assembly Transport Chair, Caroline Pidgeon, highlighting the confusion this would cause and the need for a replacement bus to cover all planned service withdrawals. We were greatly pleased when LOROL advised that replacement buses would be provided on 21<sup>st</sup> April after all!

## Buses will be replacing the train service on the following dates: -

- Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> May between Barking and South Tottenham until 12:15
- Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> July between Barking and Gospel Oak all day
- Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> July & Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> July between Barking and Gospel Oak all weekend
- Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> July between Barking and South Tottenham all day
- Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> July between Barking and Gospel Oak until 13:00
- Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> July & Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> July between Barking and South Tottenham all weekend
- Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> August & Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> August between Barking and South Tottenham all weekend
- Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> August & Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> August between Barking and South Tottenham all weekend
- Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> August between Barking and South Tottenham all day
- Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> September between Barking and South Tottenham until 12:15



**Above left:** The great rail replacement bus mystery! No one seems to know how it is that the Barking – South Tottenham/Gospel Oak rail replacement buses appear on the departures board in Greater Anglia's Walthamstow Central booking hall, but they always do!

**Above right:** The London Overground replacement buses are now provided by sister DB Regio subsidiary, Arriva. This Barking bound bus was just turning into Selborne Road, Walthamstow.

[Both GW 9<sup>th</sup> December 2012]

**Right:** The new dedicated rail replacement bus stop for Barking bound services alongside the Blackhorse Road station car park in Forest Road, Walthamstow. BGORUG rail replacement bus signage and timetable can be seen posted below the bus stop flag.

[GW 13<sup>th</sup> April 2013]





**❖BGOLUG RELAUNCHED AS BGORUG AT AGM**

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April BGOLUG held its first (and last!) meeting since 10<sup>th</sup> February 2009 in a new venue, the Leytonstone Social Club. The meeting was in two parts, an open meeting for all passengers, followed by the Group's Annual General Meeting. LOROL Concession Director, Mark Eaton and local stations manager Charlie Johnston attended and after giving an update of recent developments, Mark and Charlie fielded questions from those present. PC Roger Andrews from the British Transport Police London Overground East team, based on Platform 1 at Barking also gave a report on recent activity and reminded those present that they were always available to discuss any problems passengers had and that a link on the Group's website gave the Barking Team's contact details. Finally, John Stewart, a London TravelWatch Board member, explained TravelWatch's role as the official *watchdog* for London's Passengers. All agreed that the meeting had been a success and it was agreed that another should be held in the autumn. Those present also thought it disgraceful that Transport for London and Network Rail had ignored numerous requests to send representatives to the meeting.

The Group's AGM then took place. It was decided to raise subscriptions for the first time in many years. From 1<sup>st</sup> July 2013 the annual subscription will rise from £3.00 to £5.00. It was hoped that by deferring the increase, most previous members would be encouraged to renew before the increase came into effect. By the end of the AGM 14 members had renewed and 8 new members had joined. **It is important that members renew as soon as possible as cash reserves are dwindling with there being just enough in the bank for one more passenger newsletter.** Renewed efforts will be made to encourage the local authorities along the line to affiliate to the Group.

The meeting then approved a new constitution for the Group which also changed the Group's name to the *Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group*. The officers and Executive Committee for 2013-14 were then elected.

Chair:	Alderman Frederick Jones, Barking & Dagenham Council
Vice-Chair:	Richard H. Pout, B.Sc. Econ. MILT
Secretary:	Glenn Wallis
Treasurer:	Adrian Liddle
Executive Committee:	Jeffery Harvey
	Graham Larkbey (Assistant Secretary)
	Cllr. Nicholas Russell (Waltham Forest Council)
Membership Secretary:	Susie Henry

In the discussions that followed it was agreed that the Executive Committee should consider arranging a further Group meeting in July. A full report of both meetings will appear in due course.

**❖TORNADO LET DOWN!**

*Cathedrals Express* ran another railtour from Southend on 16<sup>th</sup> March, this time the destination was Bristol and the train was routed over the Barking – Gospel Oak Line as usual. Motive power was originally to be LNER streamliner *Bittern* (sister of world speed record holder *Mallard*) but was then switched to *Tornado*. Unfortunately *Tornado* failed her fitness to run exam the previous night. Operator Steam Dreams was able to secure Southern pacific *Clan Line* as a replacement but she came onto the train at Acton, so the train was hauled from Southend by DB Schenker's Royal Class 67



60163 *Tornado* at Barrow Hill on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2012 [GW].

diesel 67006 *Royal Sovereign*. Unfortunately the next *Cathedrals Express* train from Southend on 28<sup>th</sup> September is also diesel hauled as far as Peterborough, where 4464 *Bittern* takes over to York.



We must now wait for the Christmas season *Cathedrals Express* Southend train to Chichester on 14<sup>th</sup> December, which hopefully will be steam hauled throughout.

## ❖ PRESS CUTTINGS

**Barking and Dagenham**  
**Post**

**Barking & Dagenham Post** **13<sup>th</sup> February 2013**

# Disappointment as railway is left out of massive upgrade

## Trains will not have extra carriages to relieve overcrowding

by John Phillips  
[john.phillips@archant.co.uk](mailto:john.phillips@archant.co.uk)

**R**ail campaigners are disappointed their line could not be included in a £320million upgrade of Overground routes in the capital.

The Barking to Gospel Oak Line User Group was critical of Transport for London (TfL) for claiming "all Overground lines" would get extra carriages to ease overcrowding in London.

Transport for London last Wednesday said Overground services would have five carriages by 2015 but it now transpires the two-carriage diesel trains on the Barking to Gospel Oak Line will not because it is not electrified.

User group assistant secretary Glenn Wallis, 55, said: "It has slipped Transport for London's mind that the Barking to Gospel Oak Line, once known as 'the forgotten rail-



**Rail campaigner Glenn Wallis**

way', will be the only London Overground line not to benefit from this investment.

"It will have to soldier on with its twin-carriage diesel trains until the government, TfL and Network Rail can agree a funding package to put up the overhead wires to let electric trains ease the chronic overcrowding that plagues the line."

TfL says the programme to introduce five-car trains on all London Overground routes will increase railway capacity by 25 per cent. It includes longer platforms and an extra 57 carriages.

A spokesman added: "The London Overground network operates electric trains on all routes except for the Gospel Oak to Barking section, which uses a fleet of diesel trains.

**Benefits**

"We have been making the case to government and Network Rail for the electrification of this route, which would allow us to run a fully electric train fleet and in turn have a positive impact on air quality in the capital.

"We have offered a contribution towards any funding package but to date the required government and Network Rail funding has not been forthcoming.

"However, we continue to work with the Department for Transport and Network Rail to explore ways to electrify and increase capacity on the Gospel Oak to Barking route."

Owing to a £4.9billion funding gap, Network Rail has not included the electrification of the line in its latest Strategic Business Plan for 2014-2019.

A Department for Transport spokesman said investment is weighed against subsequent economic benefits, adding: "Electrification of the Gospel Oak to Barking line has been estimated by Network Rail to cost £90m – some two-and-a-half times higher than the average cost per mile of electrification on other lines – and full freight benefits cannot be realised until government-funded electrification work on other routes has been completed."

## RAIL 719

**3<sup>rd</sup> April 2013**

# Barking-Gospel Oak electrification misses out in Budget

Hopes that an announcement would be made on the electrification of the Barking to Gospel Oak line were dashed the Chancellor's Budget on March 20, despite London Assembly's Transport Committee writing to George Osborne urging him to fund the project.

Even with widespread agreement between all interested parties, including the Mayor, Transport for London, the rail industry and passenger groups that the heavily overcrowded line should be electrified, no funding has been forthcoming.

Although TfL has offered to contribute £25 million towards the estimated £90m cost of the scheme, this price tag has been disputed by the Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group, which

contends that, according to industry sources, the overall cost should be no more than £50m.

Group Secretary Richard Pout said following a meeting with DfT: "The DfT finally recognised that the Barking to Gospel Oak Line was not some North East London backwater but in fact was part of a national strategic freight route."

The DfT also believes that the £90m is too expensive, but as yet, no proper cost study has been done. However, at the request of TfL, NR has begun the unusual step of undertaking a detailed (GRIP 3) examination of the actual costs of electrification, despite the project being not fully funded.

NR is said to be concerned that that following the opening of Crossrail in 2018, increased traffic levels over the Barking-Gospel Oak

route would make electrification more difficult to plan.

It told a March 7 Assembly Transport Committee meeting that full funding must be made available in 2013 to complete the electrification programme before Crossrail opens.

Despite having begun a procurement process for new three or four-car DMUs (RAIL 697), TfL appears to have settled on electrification as being the only sensible answer to providing increased capacity on the line. It said that due to a lack of new "off-the-shelf" diesel trains, the only way to provide additional coaches to relieve the extreme peak overcrowding was by providing the overhead wires and infrastructure so that longer electric trains could operate over the line.

**Glenn Wallis, Secretary, Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group**