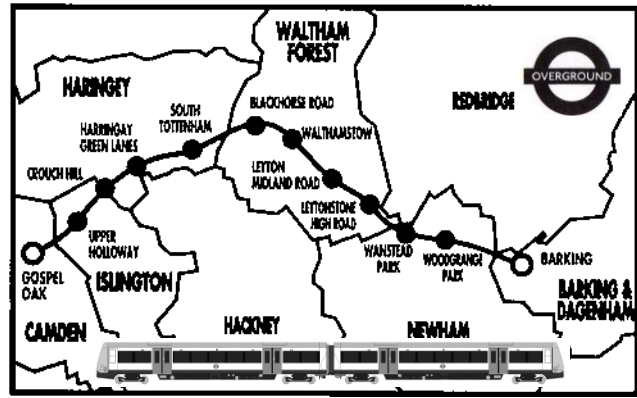


BARKING – GOSPEL OAK RAIL USER GROUP

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NEWS RELEASE

6th July 2015

PASSENGERS SNUBBED BY RAIL BOSSES!



In spite of over two months notice, train and rail infrastructure managers refuse to face frustrated passengers

Aware of passengers growing exasperation with crush loaded rush hour trains and worries over delays to the line's electrification, the Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group^[1] arranged a public meeting to take place in Walthamstow on Thursday 9th July so that they could have a chance to put questions to managers from London Overground (LOROL)^[2], Transport for London (TfL) and Network Rail and listen to what they had to say.





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The Group intended the meeting to discuss and inform passengers about:

- The ever worsening overcrowding and measures that would reduce it such as lengthening or running more diesel trains until new electric 4-carriage trains arrive in 2018.
- Reassurance that the electrification of the line will go ahead as planned for early 2017 completion, in spite of the rumours of delays and postponements over the last six months and the latest announcement by the Government of “pauses” in electrification schemes for reassessment of ballooning costs.
- Discussion of how to minimise disruption to passengers while electrification takes place.

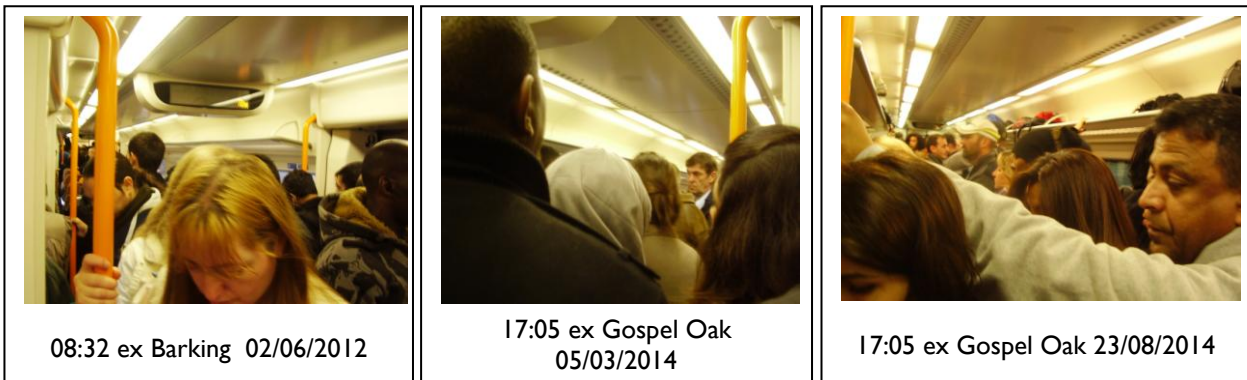
There was therefore some surprise when all three organisations declined the Group’s invitation to send representatives to the meeting! Said Group Secretary Glenn Wallis, “As both LOROL and TfL have attended our meetings in the past we are baffled why they will not attend this time.”

He continued, “We decided to go ahead with the meeting as we feel that our members and the line’s passengers deserve a forum where they will be heard. We have invited all the MPs^[3] and London Assembly Members^[4] who have the line in their constituencies as well as ward councillors from all six councils^[5] who have the line pass through their wards.”

“Thanks to Parliamentary Questions asked by our long time supporter, Islington North MP, Jeremy Corbyn, we know that our electrification scheme is a separate scheme from those recently “paused” by the Government, but we have asked Jeremy to put down another question to clarify that there will be no further delay. The scheme’s completion date has already slipped by around six months.”

“Our friend, London Assembly Transport Vice-Chair, Caroline Pidgeon MBE, has asked questions of Mayor Boris Johnson, and discovered that TfL have no plans to provide any relief for our crushed commuters (apart from providing additional handrails in the existing trains for standing passengers to hold onto) until new electric trains arrive in mid 2018.”

“TfL say that they cannot run any additional trains before then because there are no slots available in which to run them. However the Rail Regulator has stated that further ‘crowd busting’ trains, known as PIXC-busters^[6] **could** be run in the peak periods.”



“Our passengers cannot wait another three years for overcrowding relief, trains are leaving Barking in the morning peak carrying around 230 passengers with precious room left for anyone to board at intermediate stations. TfL has got to use some imagination to source at least one more diesel train^[7] to enable a 10-minute frequency service to run in the peak periods. There is a new diesel train coming on the market utilising recycled bodyshells and bogies from withdrawn District Line trains with new state of the art electronics and diesel engines. If TfL does not want to risk the new technology, then they should try to obtain an older train from one of the companies that will buy them.”





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Left: 17:28 from Gospel Oak to Barking on a normal evening at Walthamstow Queen's Road, 18th June 2015.

Centre: 17:50 from Gospel Oak to Barking at Walthamstow Queen's Road on 29th April 2015 when the 17:28 from Gospel Oak had been cancelled. The 17:37 from Gospel Oak had been totally full.

Right: Unidentified morning Barking to Gospel Oak service at Leyton Midland Road on 11th June 2015 when the 06:52 Barking – South Tottenham, 07:18 Barking – Gospel Oak and 07:59 Woodgrange Park to Willesden Junction Low Level had all been cancelled. [LW]

“When the new electric *Aventra* trains do arrive BGORUG will be pressing TfL to implement the options in the contract with Bombardier to provide enough trains to operate the new extension to Barking Riverside and the rest of the line with a train every 12 minutes in peak times with off peak services never being less than every 15 minutes.”



The doors close on a full and standing 07:33 Barking to Gospel Oak at the start of its journey on 6th January 2015



The new Bombardier *Aventra* train which will be built in Derby and delivered to Crossrail in 2017 and London Overground in 2018



Transport journalist, author and historian, Christian Wolmar *has* agreed to attend the meeting on 9 July. Christian is currently seeking the nomination to be the Labour Party candidate for London Mayor in 2016.

Christian has a long association with the Barking – Gospel Oak Line. In 1992 when he joined *The Independent* as transport correspondent, he started a series on the follies arising out of rail privatisation which was then in full swing. One such story concerned the *footpath to nowhere*, where he told the





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story of a certain rail user group trying to get a footpath link between two stations, Walthamstow Central and Walthamstow Queen's Road!

Christian has always lived in or around Tufnell Park and been an occasional user of the line. He is interested in the idea of reopening Junction Road station. He is a keen cyclist and cyclist's advocate and opposed to HS2. He has written several books on railway history and rail privatisation and has a regular column in *RAIL* magazine.



The meeting will be held on Thursday 9th July at Gnome House, 7 Blackhorse Lane, Walthamstow E17 6DS. The building is a short walk from Blackhorse Road station. The Gnome House café will open at 6.30 pm and the meeting will commence at 7 pm, ending around 9 pm. It will be followed by a short meeting for BGORUG members.

Should the strike on London Underground go ahead on 8-9 July, please try and allow extra time for your journeys. Crowd control will likely be in force at London Overground stations.

- ENDS -

Notes for editors follow



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NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Formed in 1964 as the Barking – Kentish Town Line Committee to fight Dr. Beeching’s proposed closure of the line, the Barking – Gospel Oak Rail 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 passenger railway in North East London, finally approved by the Government on 26 June 2013. It is hoped that electric passenger trains will have commenced operation before the end of 2018.

2. Following the transfer of responsibility for the former Silverlink Metro services from the Department for Transport (DfT) in 2006, Transport for London (TfL), 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, subsequently extended to November 2016 by TfL. TfL has shortlisted four bidders for the new London Rail Concession to start in November 2016:
 - Arriva Rail London Ltd (Deutsche Bahn)
 - LoKeGo Ltd [Keolis (UK) Ltd (51%) & Go-Ahead Holding Ltd (49%) joint venture]
 - Metroline Rail Ltd (owned by Singapore based transport group ComfortDelGro)
 - MTR Corp (Hong Kong Mass Transit)

3.

Keir Starmer	Holborn & St. Pancras
Jeremy Corbyn	Islington North
Catherine West	Hornsey & Wood Green
David Lammy	Tottenham
Stella Creasy	Walthamstow
John Cryer	Leyton & Wanstead
Lyn Brown	West Ham
Stephen Timms	East Ham
Margaret Hodge	Barking



