

MAY 2006 NEWS UPDATE

THE BEGINNING OF A WHOLE NEW ERA!

At our meeting on May 9th, our guest speaker was Hugh Chaplain (Head of Rail Franchising at Transport for London), who outlined TfL's plans for the Silverlink Metro group of routes from autumn 2007 onwards. Fasten your seatbelts and hold onto your hats – this is heady stuff. Basically, by December 2010 TfL intend to have 4 trains per hour running on the Richmond-Stratford route, plus 4 trains an hour on a new Queens Park-Stratford route via Primrose Hill and Camden Road. Our service is also planned to become 4 trains per hour, running between Barking and Clapham Junction via Willesden Junction. The idea is to get this vastly-improved service pattern in place in time for it to bed down before the Olympics – but obviously it will bring massive benefits to the whole area for years afterwards. Stations will be improved and extended where necessary to accommodate longer trains, and other infrastructure improvements will be carried out in collaboration with Network Rail. Our line could even be electrified!

Obviously all this won't happen at once, but modest service improvements are being considered for the near future, stations will be upgraded in the first 2-3 years, and all stations and routes will accept the full range of Oyster fares (including prepay) from Day One. Tenders to run "North London Railway" (as the routes will be known) will be invited in June, and TfL will announce the winner in summer next year, to take over operations in late summer/autumn 2007. So for those who have a soft spot for our line's branch-line atmosphere: make the most of it, because it will be very, very different indeed a few years from now!

BACK TO THE PRESENT

A few years ago, who'd have thought our line would ever be numbered among the **most reliable** in the country? It's true – Silverlink's performance has improved still further recently, with 19 out of 20 of our trains arriving within 4-5 minutes of scheduled arrival time. No train operator ever hits 100% - there are always some delays due to things like struggling freight trains, trespassing, passengers arguing with staff etc – so to hit the region of 97%+ is a real achievement. Remember you can always check whether the service is running OK by ringing 0208 963 6087 before you set out.

Silverlink have renewed their efforts to improve **fare collection** throughout their system, and revenue is up as a result. Their aim from now on is only to roster guards on our route who are qualified to issue tickets, though there may be occasions when a non-qualified guard has to cover (and there are still security issues about collecting fares on evening services). Remember: our line is NOT part of the Penalty Fare scheme (despite the misleading posters at stations which should have been replaced by now), but passengers without tickets should buy one from the on-train conductor if possible. If not, anyone going beyond Barking or Gospel Oak (or changing onto the Tube at Blackhorse Road) should buy one there or they risk getting a PF on the next leg of their journey.

On the **management** front there have been a few changes. Managing Director Mark Steward has moved over to Silverlink County, to be replaced by Tom Joyner. Fleet Manager Paul Harding has also moved on (to C2C); Stephen Hopkinson is covering while a permanent replacement is found. We welcome Tom and (while he's here) Stephen; our thanks & best wishes go to Mark & Paul.

Our lengthy period of **weekend engineering works** ends after the weekend of May 21st/22nd, and the full train service will be back to normal the following weekend for Whitsun Bank Holiday. Perfect for visiting Southend, Westcliff (for Southend Air Show on the Sunday & Monday – details at www.southendairshow.com), Hampstead Heath, Kew Gardens, Richmond..... we've urged Silverlink to give more

publicity to the line's day-out potential – and remember our conductors can issue a ticket to any station in the country. So if you want a Saver Return to Penzance or Inverness, you only have to ask!

PROPOSED CYCLE RESTRICTIONS

Silverlink have received a number of responses to their consultation exercise and are now going through them. They will then issue a revised set of proposals for comment before finalising the restrictions and putting them into force.

STATION TO STATION

Work is well under way to replace the westbound shelter at **Walthamstow Queens Road** with the new type of enclosed “pod” waiting area – a shelter with glazed walls, a door and heating – to see how it fares at such a location. The inside wall of the other shelter is much better for its light-coloured repaint – as are the shelters at **Upper Holloway**. **Leyton MR** has had a litter-clearing blitz, and similar exercises are scheduled for other stations. Silverlink management are pressing their IT department and BT to find ways of improving the reliability of the information systems at stations on the line.

NEW WOMEN'S SAFETY GROUP WANTS TO HEAR FROM YOU!

SafetyNet, Waltham Forest's Crime & Disorder Reduction Partnership, has asked Women's Design Service to find out how local women think safety could be improved in the area. They are looking for interested participants for several sessions over a 2-month period to discuss safety issues with other women, take part in local safety audits (including locations like Walthamstow Queens Road station), receive community safety training etc. If interested please contact Denize LeDeatte on 07960 151 383 (email dledeatte@wds.org.uk) or Wendy Davis at wdavis@wds.org.uk. Alternatively their office telephone number is 020 7490 5210 (ask for Hannah).

PLANNING A TRIP TO WALES THIS SUMMER?

If so, try and work in a trip on the Heart of Wales line between Swansea and Shrewsbury, which goes right up through the middle of the country through superb scenery serving numerous villages and towns on the way. The perfect antidote to the hustle & bustle of London. We have established an informal twinning arrangement with their User Group, the Heart of Wales Line Travellers' Association (HOWLTA). See www.heart-of-wales.co.uk for all the details, including cheap fare offers!