

BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP

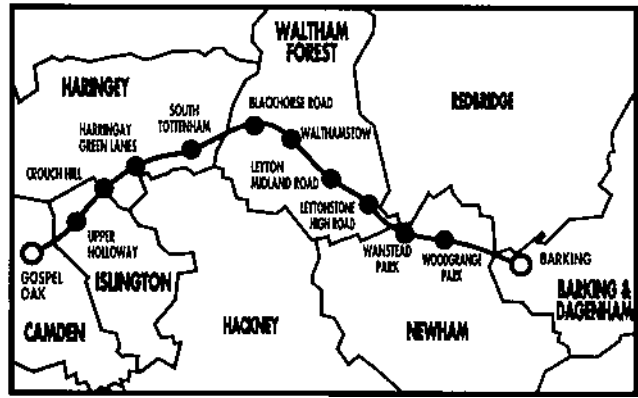
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NEWS RELEASE

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LONG WAIT FOR A SHORTER WALK OVER AT LAST!

Rail users welcome conclusion of 10-year legal wrangle over footpath to link two Walthamstow stations

The Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group (BGOLUG)¹ welcomed news this week that the High Court had upheld Waltham Forest Council's attempts to provide a footpath linking Walthamstow Central rail station with Walthamstow Queen's Road station through Exeter Road Estate.

BGOLUG has been campaigning for the link for around 15 years to improve the lot of passengers making the change between Chingford Line trains and local buses and Barking-Gospel Oak Line trains, now part of Transport for London's (TfL) London Overground network.

Passengers have always been faced with a long walk via Shrubland Road or South Grove taking 10 or 15 minutes. Back in the early 1990s those "in the know", by fighting through the 'jungle' at the bottom of the Walthamstow Central car park, could get between the two stations in less than 5 minutes. But then the land, which was part of the old Hoe Street railway goods yard and the long demolished Walthamstow power station was sold to a housing association for development, putting an end to the unofficial short cut.

In granting permission for the development, Waltham Forest Council accepted the case for an official path between the two stations and made it a condition of the



planning consent for what is now Exeter Road Estate. However, the footpath, which was to run from the station car park, alongside the new housing and across Edison Close to a new entrance facing the Walthamstow Queen's Road station footbridge, was never provided.

When persuasion failed, the council took enforcement action against the housing association and the dispute went to a planning appeal which agreed that the footpath should be provided. The housing association still failed to comply with the planning inspector's decision and so the council eventually went to the High Court. This decision means that the council now has the power to build the footpath itself and charge the cost to the housing association.

BGOLUG Secretary Richard Pout said, "It has taken a long time for this decision to finally arrive and we are pleased that the council has persevered in holding the housing association to its obligation. We hope that the council will now liaise with Network Rail and TfL to get this link built as quickly as possible. This link has been BGOLUG's longest running campaign. The footpath will greatly improve access to the London Overground for many of the borough's residents. Bus passengers will be able to use the new subway from the bus station to reach the footpath. We hope that it will be possible to dedicate the path to the memory of our late member Ray Dudley who was its most passionate advocate."

News of the High Court decision came as BGOLUG was about to issue its latest report on the stations along the Barking-Gospel Oak Line. TfL London Rail is embarking upon a major works programme that will last for up to three years to improve London Overground stations. The priority will be to replace existing real time passenger information and CCTV systems and bring lighting up to a high common standard.

Said Richard Pout, "We believe that budgetary constraints will limit what else TfL London Rail will be able to achieve in the short term, but we are making suggestions for work at all the borough's stations which could be carried out over the next few years."

Shelter from the elements is the most pressing need for passengers waiting on the borough's windswept Overground Platforms. But the Group also has a long term vision for Walthamstow Queen's Road station which it submitted to the council as part of the 2007 Town Centre Consultation².

"In the long term we would like to see a station entrance on Selborne Road", said Richard Pout. "We would also like to work with the council to improve the current environment around Leyton Midland Road and Leytonstone High Road stations, both entrances are very dingy and unattractive to passengers. We have offered to meet council representatives to discuss this on several occasions."

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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. BGOLUG's response to Waltham Forest Council's 2007 Walthamstow Town Centre *Vision* public consultation can be found on the group's website, www.barking-gospel oak.org.uk.

