

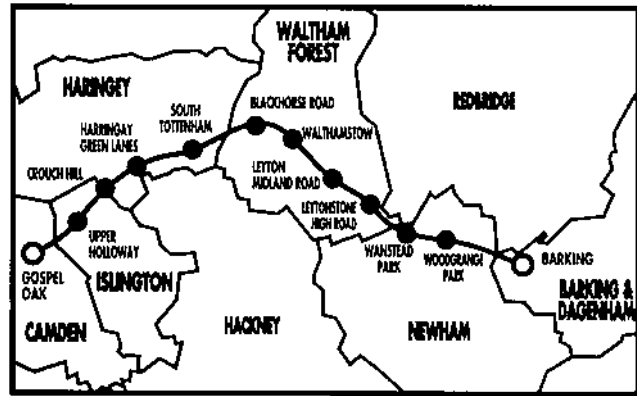
## **BARKING-GOSPEL OAK LINE USER GROUP**

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

**24<sup>th</sup> September 2010**

### **“DON’T FORGET US, BORIS!”**

#### ***Is Mayor Boris forgetting Overground passengers in North-East London?***

**Overground passengers worry that in the battle for government funds to improve London’s creaking rail infrastructure, Boris Johnson is forgetting the need to bring in electric trains and ease overcrowding on the Barking-Gospel Oak Line. Known in the 1990s as the *Forgotten Railway*, is the line being forgotten again?**

While rumours abound that government investment in many rail mega projects is to be slashed in the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review, the Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group (BGOLUG)<sup>1</sup> is hoping that London Mayor, Boris Johnson, will remember the pressing needs of **all** the passengers he speaks for in his negotiations with Transport Secretary Phillip Hammond.

The Mayor was at loggerheads with the last Secretary of State (Lord Andrew Adonis) over electrifying the line and it was hoped that the new Transport Secretary, being of the same political allegiance as the Mayor, would be able to resolve the impasse. Liberal Democrat Transport Minister Norman Baker<sup>2</sup> and Liberal Democrats on the London Assembly<sup>3</sup> support the electrification plan. There is also Labour support for the scheme in both Parliament<sup>4</sup> and the London Assembly<sup>5</sup>.



**“DON’T FORGET US, BORIS!”**  
**Electrify the Barking-Gospel Oak Line**

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Barking-Gospel Oak Line electrification has been identified as *the* essential “gap infill” electrification scheme by:-

- Network Rail
- Transport for London’s own rail freight unit
- Rail freight hauliers DB Schenker (Formally English, Welsh & Scottish Railway) and Freightliner

There are obvious environmental benefits from removing the emissions of up to 150 daily diesel train movements across North-East London as well as<sup>6</sup>:-

- Replacement of inadequate, overcrowded 2-carriage diesel trains by 3-carriage electric trains
- Electric Barking-Gospel Oak passenger trains would allow services to be extended through Hampstead and Willesden Junction to Clapham Junction and Richmond.
- Having both North London and Barking-Gospel Oak Lines electrified would enable freight operators to withdraw many diesel locomotives from the London area and replace them from the pool of over 50 electric locomotives that are currently stored through lack of work and under threat of export to eastern Europe.

BGOLUG Secretary Richard Pout said, “Compared with the £1 billion plus rail electrification projects promoted by the last Government, this really is small beer. The 12-mile Barking-Gospel Oak Line is the only non-electrified through route in North-East London but it is already electrified over some short lengths and another two miles is about to be added as part of the Thameslink project. To complete the whole line would cost less than £30million.”

Oyster cards and putting the line on the Tube Map is attracting ever growing passenger numbers causing overcrowding on the new 2-coach diesel trains at peak times. The line is designated to carry the freight from the new London Gateway Port, east of Tilbury, while Transport for London Rail also envisages freight from the electrified Channel Tunnel Rail Link passing through Barking and on to the line.

“It makes no sense to put off the decision any longer,” said Richard Pout, “The preparatory clearance and signals work<sup>7</sup> has already been done, it’s time to get on with it and get the wires up!”

- ENDS -

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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. As Liberal Democrat Transport Spokesperson, Norman Baker MP asked two Parliamentary Questions regarding Barking-Gospel Oak Line electrification in July 2009.
3. Caroline Pidgeon AM is Vice-Chair of the London Assembly’s Transport Committee and the spokesperson for the London Assembly Liberal Democrats on transport matters. She was elected from the Londonwide List. On 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009, Caroline toured the line with BGOLUG members to see the overcrowding and give her support to the electrification scheme and has asked many questions of the Mayor regarding the line.
4. Jeremy Corbyn is the long serving MP for Islington North and an equally long-time supporter of the Barking – Gospel Oak Line. In 2009 Jeremy sponsored two Early Day Motions on Barking-Gospel Oak electrification in the House of Commons.
5. Jennette Arnold AM is Deputy Chair of the London Assembly and a Labour Assembly Member for the North East Constituency (Hackney, Islington & Waltham Forest). In 2008, along with BGOLUG, she asked London Mayor and Chair of the Transport for London Board, Boris Johnson, to accompany her on a visit to the Barking – Gospel Oak Line to see the overcrowding at first hand. Mayor Boris declined, yet since has been only too pleased to visit and sing the praises of the modernized East London Line. Both Jennette and fellow Labour Assembly Member for the City & East London, John Biggs, regularly question the Mayor on overcrowding and electrification of the Barking-Gospel Oak Line.
6. BGOLUG’s case for electrification was set out in a 2007 paper which can be found in the ‘Library’ section of our website [www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk](http://www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk), also on pages 4, 5 & 8 of our response to Network Rail’s Draft Electrification Route Utilisation Strategy which is also on our website.
7. In 2007 the Department for Transport awarded a grant of £18.5m from its Transport Innovation Fund, match funded by Network Rail’s Discretionary Investment Fund for a £37m scheme to increase the clearances (W10 loading gauge) between Woodgrange Park and Willesden to allow an alternative route to the North London Line for the passage of the largest international shipping containers from the current and planned Essex and Suffolk ports. The scheme also funded re-signalling between Wanstead Park and Upper Holloway which was to double the number of trains that could be run, allowing TfL London Rail to run a 15-minute interval passenger service and more freight to be carried. The clearance work for W10 loading gauge was carried out during autumn 2008, but the re-signalling work overran and was not commissioned until 14<sup>th</sup> November 2009.

