

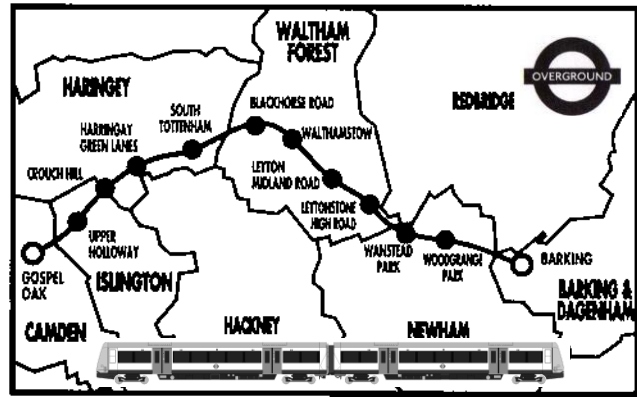
BARKING – GOSPEL OAK RAIL USER GROUP

FOUNDED 1964

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NEWS RELEASE

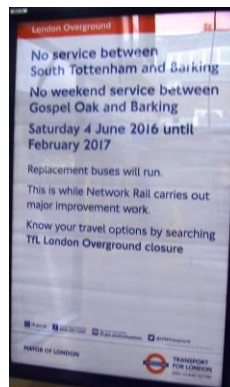
8th June 2016



“THE LAST TRAIN’S GONE!”

Part of a vital London rail link has closed for 8 months to allow much-needed electrification to take place

This means inconvenience and delay for thousands of passengers, who face months using rail replacement buses or alternative services – and may find themselves paying more in the process



On Monday (6th June) thousands of rail passengers began to experience the 8 months of disruption to their daily commute caused by the planned closure of a vital section of the London Overground network. This is to allow Network Rail engineers to install the overhead electrification infrastructure required to allow electric trains to use the last diesel only passenger railway in north east London.



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BGORUG-PR-CLOSURE-LAST TRAIN'S GONE-08JUNE2016JUNE2016





“THE LAST TRAIN’S GONE!”

London Overground’s Barking – Gospel Oak Line is a vital orbital rail service running wholly outside zone 1 between east and north London used by around 10,000 commuters every working day, some from as far afield as Benfleet in Essex and Willesden in west London. On the Barking – Gospel Oak service, they travel in packed 2-carriage diesel trains, often unable to board the first train to arrive at the platform. Network Rail closed the eastern half of the line on Saturday 4th June with the western half following on Saturday 24th September¹. The whole line will not reopen until February 2017 and weekend services will not be restored until June 2017.

The prolonged closure is for Network Rail to install overhead wires to allow electric trains to operate over what is the last diesel only passenger railway line in north east London. Ten bridges over the railway need adapting or rebuilding, while the line itself has to be lowered in four locations to provide the necessary clearances for the 25,000 volts AC overhead cables. The most difficult job will be lowering track and platforms at Walthamstow Queen’s Road station by as much as 50cm².



The Edinburgh Road entrance



The Exeter Road entrance

**Walthamstow Queen’s Road station
was closed off by construction site hoarding within hours of the last train departing.**

Stations from Woodgrange Park to Walthamstow Queen’s Road disappeared behind construction site hoarding within hours of the last trains running.

“The Barking – Gospel Oak Rail User Group (BGORUG)³ welcomes the works,” said Group Secretary, Glenn Wallis. “They will enable Transport for London (TfL)⁴ to operate longer, electric passenger trains, thus relieving severe overcrowding and enabling faster journeys. We regret the need for major closures of the line, but accept that this is inevitable.”

Passengers started boarding the now daily rail replacement buses between Barking and Walthamstow Central⁵ a journey which takes three times longer than the equivalent rail journey of 15 minutes.

Said Glenn Wallis, “ On behalf of the passengers, we are grateful to Transport for London (TfL) for awarding the replacement bus contracts to Arriva London whose proficiency is in marked contrast to some of the previous replacement bus contract holders”.

Rail user group urges passengers to keep track of their travel costs

“Our main problems are with the other arrangements for passengers that TfL have, or have failed to make. These are:

1. The two rail replacement bus services (Route ‘T’: Barking – Walthamstow & Route ‘J’: Gospel Oak – Seven Sisters) no longer meet up at South Tottenham station; passengers are expected to use the Victoria Line between Walthamstow Central and Seven Sisters. Until 24th September, the trains are still running between Gospel Oak and South Tottenham on



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“THE LAST TRAIN’S GONE!”

weekdays, so passengers will have the additional 5-7 minute walk between Seven Sisters and South Tottenham stations.

2. During the closures passengers will have to find alternative routes for their journeys. Whatever routes they choose, they will be much slower and much less convenient than their normal train journeys.

“It would be completely wrong for passengers who are faced with much longer and much less convenient journeys than normal to be expected to pay higher fares,” said Glenn Wallis.

Some passengers may choose to travel via central London (Zone 1). TfL have undertaken to refund extra fares for such regular passengers by rebating weekly in arrears onto their Oyster or contactless cards. However this concession is hedged with unreasonable restrictions. It only applies to Oyster/contactless card holders, not those using paper tickets and involves keeping a Pay-As-You-Go balance (as high as £31 for those travelling in from outside Zone 6) pending receiving the weekly refund. A regular user is defined by TfL as someone who used the line at least three days per week during April.

Also, many passengers – probably most – will find alternative routes which do not involve Zone 1. Many of these will entail higher fares than normal – particularly if they use a normal service bus for part of their trip. TfL have refused to allow any fares protection to these passengers.

“BGORUG has analysed the information that TfL has supplied and worked through a number of examples of alternative journeys that do not pass through zone 1,” said Glenn Wallis.

“This shows a common extra cost of **£15** if someone works five days per week – which could be **£510** over the whole of the closures.”

“BGORUG, after talking to many passengers has concluded that not many are actually re-planning their commute via zone 1, so they will receive no benefit from TfL’s arrangements.”

“We URGENTLY ask that all necessary political and other pressure be brought to bear on TfL to ensure that no existing passengers - regardless of their type of ticket - have to pay any more than they pay now. This must include use of alternative National Rail lines and stations and any normal service buses in the area of the line.”

Said Glenn Wallis, “BGORUG strongly recommends that all Barking – Gospel Oak passengers keep a careful record of any increase in cost over and above what they normally pay to use the train service with a view to claiming the difference back from TfL.”

3. Even after all the work is finally completed and the line reopens, passengers cannot look forward to any immediate relief from overcrowding.

After Network Rail authorises electric trains to use the new infrastructure in June next year, commuters will have to carry on struggling to board the same chronically overcrowded 2-carriage diesel trains as before the closure for another 11 months, before new 4-coach electric trains take over the service.

“It is grossly unfair of TfL to expect passengers to have to endure the same travelling conditions following all the great inconvenience of the months of closure,” said Glenn Wallis. “Especially when there will be some older 4-carriage electric trains displaced by the arrival of new trains on the Shenfield – Liverpool Street service which could be used between Barking and Gospel Oak pending the arrival of the new trains.”

“Our concerns were expressed to TfL some weeks ago, but so far they have failed to respond.”





“THE LAST TRAIN’S GONE!”

- ENDS -

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

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- 1.
2. For a more technical description of the works see *RAIL* magazine feature:
http://barking-gospeloak.org.uk/documents/20160511_Electrification.pdf
3. 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, now finally approved by the Government on 26 June 2013. It is hoped that electric passenger trains will have commenced operation no later than mid-2018.
4. 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 chosen Arriva Rail London Ltd (Deutsche Bahn) to operate the new London Rail Concession from November 2016.
5. See www.barking-gospeloak.org.uk for details.



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