

BULLETIN 12TH NOVEMBER 2018

YET MORE PAIN BEFORE ANY GAIN!



NEW TRAINS DELAYED YET AGAIN

As previously reported, the new Class 710/2 4-car electric units at Willesden depot started running on Network Rail tracks on 3rd October. However, just as suddenly as such trips to Barking and Crewe started they abruptly stopped after 27th October! To date, no further Class 710 movements have occurred. It can only be assumed that these trips revealed problems serious enough to cause Network Rail to suspend Type Approval. Before Bombardier can hand over a unit to Arriva Rail London (ARL), it has to have run without any fault for 2,000 miles. Bombardier was contracted to hand over the first unit in January 2018. A recent Transport for London (TfL) tweet (@LDNOverground) said the first Class 710 units to enter public service on the Barking – Gospel Oak route would do so in January 2019.

Throughout the last few months BGORUG has been regularly asking TfL for meetings and updates, all to no avail. A BGORUG member said recently, “TfL should treat its customers as intelligent adults and just announce exactly what is going on. No spin. No accusations. Just facts. It won’t make everyone happy but at least those who pay for the service will feel part of the *family*”.

TRAIN SHORTAGE CRISIS DEEPENS

When the lease held by ARL on the eight Class 172/0 diesel 2-car units that maintain the Barking – Gospel Oak service expired on 30th June, unit 172 002 transferred to the new lease holder, West Midlands Trains (WMT) straight away, causing the withdrawal of five peak-time trains and a surge in cancellations among the trains left in the timetable.

That started the struggle to try to discover what fate awaited the seven trains still with ARL and working on the Barking – Gospel Oak line. In spite of several questions to the Mayor by Assembly Members Jennette Arnold OBE, Andrew Dismore and Caroline Pidgeon MBE, TfL has never admitted to the Mayor that 172 002 has left the ARL fleet, but it was announced that WMT had granted a sublease of the Class 172/0s to ARL. Although 172 002 never returned to the fleet and a joint Bombardier/TfL press announcement stated that the Class 172/0s would transfer progressively to WMT, but gave no dates. In view of growing rumours that another Class 172/0 was about to transfer out of the ARL fleet, on 19th October Caroline Pidgeon asked the Mayor the dates that the sublease of each Class 172/0 unit would expire. The reply was merely that commercial negotiations were still ongoing.

In the first full week of November, informed sources stated that unit 172 006 would be going off sublease at the end of the week, sure enough, 172 006 departed Willesden depot for Bombardier’s facility at Ilford on Saturday 10th November. That day there were 23 cancelled trains on the Barking – Gospel Oak service. On Sunday 11th November 39 trains were cancelled. There are now six units left to cover the six unit diagrams in the Barking – Gospel Oak timetable. With no spare train to cover breakdowns or maintenance, prospects for passengers are indeed grim. Caroline Pidgeon will again be pressing the Mayor for the dates each Class 172/0 unit will transfer to WMT. If any more units leave the ARL fleet before February 2019, it will be impossible to operate the published Barking – Gospel Oak timetable and more replacement buses will be required. TfL have ruled out bringing in any other trains as a stop-gap.

Sadly BGORUG has to advise passengers to seek alternative routes to the line if at all possible. Otherwise, allow much more time for your journeys, expect cancellations, extended intervals in service and severe overcrowding.

LEYTON MIDLAND ROAD RECOMMENDED FOR STEP FREE ACCESS

An online petition started by Leytonstone Councillor and Deputy Leader of Waltham Forest Council, Clyde Loakes, calling for Leyton and Leytonstone Underground and Overground stations to be made step-free has resulted in the Mayor announcing that Leyton Midland Road was among 21 Overground stations he has submitted to the Department of Transport's (DfT) *Access for All* fund for approval in Control Period 6 (CP6) (2019 – 2024).

While step-free access for Underground stations is funded from the Mayor's TfL budget, Overground stations are considered part of the national rail network and step-free access is funded by the DfT. As *Access for All* is a national fund, there will be fierce competition from train operators and local authorities across the country for funding (£50m deferred from CP5 and £300m for new schemes) and so only a very few stations nominated by the Mayor are likely to receive funding. Leytonstone High Road station was not recommended as it failed to meet the DfT's criteria, including likely demand and deliverability.

LINE CLOSURES FOR ENGINEERING WORK

Sunday 2 nd December	until 12:30	Barking – South Tottenham
Sunday 23 rd December – Tuesday 1 st January		Barking – South Tottenham
Saturday 5 th January – Sunday 6 th January		Barking – South Tottenham
Sunday 13 th January	until 15:30	Barking – South Tottenham
Saturday 19 th January		Barking – South Tottenham
Sunday 20 th January		Barking – Gospel Oak
Sunday 7 th April	until 12:30	Barking – South Tottenham



Glenn Wallis
Secretary
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BARKING – GOSPEL OAK RAIL USER GROUP

FOUNDED IN 1964

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The Treasurer, **BGORUG**, 55 Trelawney Road, Essex IG6 2NJ