

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for "From the Papers" should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP (or E-Mail secretary@lurs.org.uk), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

25.08.17 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by Ernie Mackenzie* – It was most interesting reading Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst letter (see 18.08.17 entry in October Underground News) regarding the "end of the line for the Metropolitan Line Extension (MLE)". He considers that the London Mayor should cough up the £50M that is required to save his bacon because the Lib-Dem run council were so injudicious and unwise to cough up £9.6M of ratepayers' money to subsidise the MLE that has now had a derailment and looks like it will never get back on track".

29.08.17 EVENING STANDARD – A surge in rough sleeping on the *Night Tube* and buses has prompted City Hall to send in a task force to tackle the problem. Staff ride the Underground and buses all night to locate rough sleepers and offer them accommodation instead. The move comes after statistics revealed a 121% increase in the number of people sleeping on night buses between 2012/13 and 2015/16. Figures for the *Night Tube*, which launched two years ago, are not available but drivers have reported a significant number of rough sleepers on board. Support staff who carried out eight pilot shifts on the Night Tubes and buses recorded 164 homeless people using public transport as a place to sleep.

29.08.17 – 04.09.17 TIME OUT – Every February, thousands of Kiwis dress up and flood the Circle Line for *Waitangi Day* pub crawl. It finishes with a mass *Haka* near Westminster Abbey.

29.08.17 – 04.09.17 TIME OUT – It is August, so polling company *YouGov* has taken a holiday from politics to quiz Londoners about the Underground instead. Its latest survey – of 1,652 London residents – has finally given us a properly scientific, official answer to one of the burning questions of London life; which is the most hated Underground line? And it's – you guessed it – the Central Line. We already knew that the Central Line is the most delayed and most crime-ridden line on the network, as well as the second hottest and second dirtiest. Now we know it's also disliked by a quarter of Londoners – more than any other line. (The predictable favourites were the shiny Jubilee Line and the whizzy DLR). But here's the weirdest part; 30% of the people surveyed said they actually quite *liked* the Central Line. So next time you are stuck in someone's armpit in a hot tunnel between Bethnal Green and Liverpool Street take a look around at your fellow passengers and consider the fact that 1 in 3 of them is a masochist.

29.08.17 – 04.09.17 TIME OUT – Other comments resulting from the above survey were: by Thomas R "The Metropolitan Line is surely the best. It's practically a teleportation system from the City to the Chilterns"; by Ben B "I hate the Bakerloo Line. The heat in there is killing me and it's as dirty ** *****"; by Pdraig S "The Piccadilly is the absolute worst. Uncomfortable, cramped, so much luggage and take forever to get central from Heathrow"; by Jon C "I think the Central Line has the best end-of-carriage seats".

01.09.17 WATFORD OBSERVER – Crunch talks to discuss the future of the MLE have been arranged with Mayor Sadiq Khan and Watford's MP Richard Harrington and South West Herts MP David Gaulke in October, to propose an idea which could ensure the MLE goes ahead. They will suggest that TfL takes over the management of the track from Network Rail. It is being suggested this would guarantee significant funding for the project by generating private investment, while also saving taxpayer money. The original costing was £284M, however the cost has spiralled, with TfL now quoting a figure closer to £360M. TfL refused to bridge the funding gap and is asking its partners, which include the DfT, Hertfordshire County Council(HCC), Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership and Watford Borough Council (WBC), to meet the deficit.

07.09.17 METRO – Two reckless youths have been filmed hurling themselves from a moving DLR train into the dock below. Diners watched in shock as the men, who appeared to be in their teens or early-20s, jumped from the roof of the train after it left Heron Quays station. In the footage, the pair are shown climbing on top of the moving DLR train. As the train crosses the bridge, one leaps into the water below, followed by the other. It is then made to look as if police or security officers are hunting

the pair, before footage is shown of them clambering out of the water and escaping. BT Police condemned the stunt, saying: "They risked their lives and the lives of others for the sake of a *YouTube* video".

08.09.17 THE TIMES – Commuters could be tracked using their mobile phones under plans to tackle overcrowding and increase revenue from advertising. TfL followed 5.6M phones over four weeks before Christmas via Wi-Fi in stations and is assessing how to develop the monitoring system. The trial identified pinch-points on stations, overcrowding on platforms and favoured routes around the network. Controversially, the system could be used to sell advertising, with companies charged more to buy space on platforms where travellers spend the longest time. Anonymised phone data is seen as a far more accurate way to track journeys than exit and entry logs at barriers. An evaluation of the trial shows that passengers used 18 routes to go between King's Cross St. Pancras and Waterloo, the busiest station on the network, with 40% of people who were tracked failing to take the two fastest routes. The data showed even within stations one-third of passengers did not use the quickest routes between platforms and could be wasting up to two minutes. TfL is assessing how best to employ the system in the future and admitted yesterday that it could be used to track passenger movements in "real time". It said it was talking to the Information Commissioner's Office about its plans and passengers could opt out by switching their Wi-Fi off. It said the phone data was "de-personalised", with nothing to identify individuals.

14.09.17 THE TIMES – It is one of the tricks of the Underground; where to stand on the platform to be first on the train. Now some commuters have complained after Underground bosses laid new platform markings that share the secrets with millions of other passengers. They claim that the trial system has blown regular commuters' "competitive advantage" by showing every traveller the best place to stand. The network handles about 1.4B passenger journeys each year, leading to overcrowding at peak times, but seasoned travellers know the position to make sure they are opposite a door when the train stops. At King's Cross, the second busiest station on the network, transport officials have painted green markings to indicate where passengers will leave trains. The markings on the Victoria Line platform are intended to cut congestion by encouraging waiting passengers to keep these zones free, hastening peoples' exit from trains and the station. A sign with the markings reads: "Please don't stop in the green lanes. This trial aims to improve reliability and safety by reducing congestion". One commuter said: "20 years of personal Tube expertise and competitive advantage rendered useless by some green paint". Another said: "How annoying, I had it down to a tee". A third said: "This is a disgrace. I'm going to need to take a can of green paint to work". LU will assess the scheme before deciding whether to introduce it elsewhere on the rest of the network.

15.09.17 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by Carol Scleater* – "WBC has already spent £9.6M of Watford residents' money on the MLE. These residents have had to pay twice due to the £30.89 spent on the project by HCC. Of course, residents in other parts of the county have had to contribute too and they will receive no benefit. We understand a total of £130M has so far been spent on utilities and tree clearance. At the Public Inquiry in 2012, the Inspector was informed the whole project, to be delivered in 2016, would cost £118M. What is done is done, but please do not close Watford Met. station. Over 3,000 passengers per week use this station (2016 figures) and many have indicated from our petition that although they walk at present, they will be using their cars if forced to use the new Cassiobridge station. We estimate about 2,000 of these people could be driving to a station and if it is Cassiobridge, the current proposal for 145 parking spaces equals chaos. How fortunate that we still had Watford Met. station for the last Bank Holiday weekend, as there were no trains to Euston. We have learnt that four trains per hour will travel to Watford Met. station to reverse when the MLE is built as there is no other viable option. Apparently, these trains will be empty from Croxley station with no passengers allowed to travel on them, although Watford Met. is a fully functioning station with all the necessary equipment in place. These trains will return to Croxley again with no passengers allowed".

15.09.17 EVENING STANDARD – Ticket offices could be axed at 65 Overground stations under plans unveiled today, sparking a major row over passenger safety. It follows similar action across the Underground network that led to strike threats by the unions, which claimed passenger and staff safety was put at risk. TfL proposes replacing ticket offices with more and improved automatic vending machines and could include "more visible" staff selling tickets. TfL confirmed it is to conduct "a review of the role of ticket offices on a station-by-station basis and upgrading ticket machine functionality across the network. Hundreds of jobs will be affected and crisis meetings will now take place with staff

and the unions. TfL said there will be no compulsory redundancies. Critics say closing ticket offices will mean no brightly lit focal point – particularly at night – for passengers to turn to if they need help. Staff selling tickets on open platforms would leave them at increased risk of robbery, it was claimed.

15.09.17 EVENING STANDARD – Several (*later reports indicated 30 – IDM*) passengers were injured today after an explosion sent a “wall of fire” through a rush-hour Underground train in a suspected terror attack. Witnesses reported seeing people hurt and “covered in blood” after “a flash and a bang” on a District Line service at Parsons Green station. Pictures posted on social media appeared to show wires protruding from a flaming bucket inside a plastic carrier bag on the floor of the carriage. One passenger was just metres from the explosion, which took place at 08.20, said: “There was a surge of fire. I heard a woman screaming. A fireball came down the train. People were running and screaming. I heard a loud bang, there was panic and shock. A woman’s hair was burned – it was terrible. People ran, I fell on the floor – it was like a nightmare”. At least six people were understood to have suffered. More were injured in a crush as passengers tried to flee the station. Others fled down the tracks. Hundreds of passengers, including babies and children on their way to school, were caught up in the incident. None of the injuries were believed to be life threatening. The suspected device, apparently a builder’s bucket filled with a white substance that had been placed in a *Lidl* bag, was seen in flames afterwards, with wires hanging out of the bag. One theory is that the device failed to fully detonate. Another commuter said: “I just heard a big noise and saw a shot of flames come past. I could feel it singe the back of my head. At that point the doors opened and I just ran out on to the platform. At Parsons Green there is just one staircase down. There was a mass of people. I didn’t see any staff on the platform. When I got on the platform it just came to a complete standstill. It was clear that some people had fallen on the stairs in the rush and were being stood on and crushed”.

18.09.17 METRO – The last piece of track was connected at Whitechapel station, bringing the introduction of Crossrail a significant step closer. It means construction trains are now able to travel the full length of London’s new tunnels, from Plumstead in the east to the Royal Oak portal in the west. More than 1,000 highly skilled workers were involved in this part of the £14.8B project. Together they installed 63,000 sleepers and 51,419Km of rails. More than 13,500m³ of concrete were also used.

18.09.17 METRO – Canary Wharf now has 17 custom-built escalators to cope with the increasing passenger numbers expected once (Crossrail) services begin. The framework for a further 37 escalators have also been completed at Paddington, Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon and Liverpool Street stations. Together, they make up around one mile of escalators. The longest escalator on the line will be at Bond Street – a 60-metre-long escalator that will carry passengers 25.7m from Hanover Square to the Crossrail platforms. In total, 81 escalators will be installed at nine Crossrail stations between Paddington and Woolwich, and 54 new lifts. All 41 stations on the route will have step-free access.

20.09.17 EVENING STANDARD – A medical student died in an accident after climbing onto the tracks at an Underground station while drunk and being hit by a train, an inquest heard. He had been refused entry to a nightclub and was going home when he clambered over a barrier into the tunnel at Old Street station on 21 May this year. He was hit by a Northern Line train at about 00.24. The Imperial College student, from Croydon, was “not used to drinking”. Recording the death as an accident, the Coroner said: “He was so drunk he was not able to gain entry to a nightclub. One of his friends was concerned and followed him, he was 10 to 15 seconds behind. By the time he reached the platform he had already jumped onto the track. He had a lovely family and friends, he did not have anxiety or use drugs, as far as I can make out he fully intended to get up the next morning and continue his life”.

22.09.17 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by S. Friedman* – “All the talk on the MLE, naturally enough, has been about the Met. extension. Just supposing instead, the Overground operated a shuttle service from Watford Junction to Croxley southbound (down) platform. A “one engine in steam” principle would permit a single line of track which would obviate the need to alter bridges, require the installation of a single rather than a double turnout to join the Met. Line, simplify the new stations and, hopefully avoid the construction of a power station, all leading to vast saving of costs. Network Rail would become the lead developer and owner of the track and assets which would be leased to Overground. Traffic receipts would continue to be received by TfL. Such a scheme would leave the Met. Line as it is and could end all political objections. Travellers from the south who wished to proceed further would need to use the stairs at Croxley to change platforms but regular users of the Underground would find this no hardship. For the benefit of those who wished to proceed to Watford Junction either the 340 bus

service could be retimed and rerouted from Watford Met. or a shuttle bus service inaugurated the cost of which could come out of the savings from the scheme. To operate the rail shuttle two carriages should suffice and be easier to accommodate at the Junction station. The carriages might be part of an order for new carriages on the Overground. If Watford or Hertfordshire Councils hold out as still wanting a railway with bells and whistles they should look to their ratepayers' pockets to pay for it".

22.09.17 THE TIMES – The Metropolitan Police Commissioner Cressida Dick revealed that the device that partially detonated at Parsons Green was packed with explosives and shrapnel that would have had a far worse impact had it exploded fully. She said: "It was a very, very dangerous bomb. It could have been so much worse. Thank goodness no one was killed at Parsons Green, though it must have been absolutely horrific for the people on the train".

25.09.17 EVENING STANDARD – *Art on the Underground* came to life today when body-paint artist Sarah Attwell recreated famous works such as Van Gogh's "Sunflowers" on volunteer models. The works were to publicise on-line art dealer *Rise*.

26.09.17 – 02.10.17 TIME OUT – *Additional comments on the green floor markings at King's Cross St Pancras station (see 14.09.17 above)* – By Michael O: "Gone are the days when I can get on the train first because plebeians don't know where the doors open. A sad day indeed"; by Torsten A: "If a slap of green paint can replace 20 years of "experience", what does that say about your mental capacity?".

26.09.17 – 02.10.17 TIME OUT – Everyone loves an Underground strike, so we're thrilled to find out that there is one planned for 5 October. Underground drivers belonging to ASLEF have voted overwhelmingly for strike action. They say they aren't happy with progress on talks to improve Underground's staff work-life balance.

26.09.17 CITY AM – TfL has released official statistics on which Underground lines have been keeping passengers happy in recent months. In its latest quarterly performance report, it said Circle and Hammersmith & City and the Metropolitan lines came up top among passengers, with scores of 88%. Other lines were scored as follows: Jubilee and District lines 87%; Piccadilly Line 86%; Northern and Victoria lines 85%; Bakerloo and Central lines 84%.