

# EAST LONDON LINE POST-CLOSURE NOTES – 18

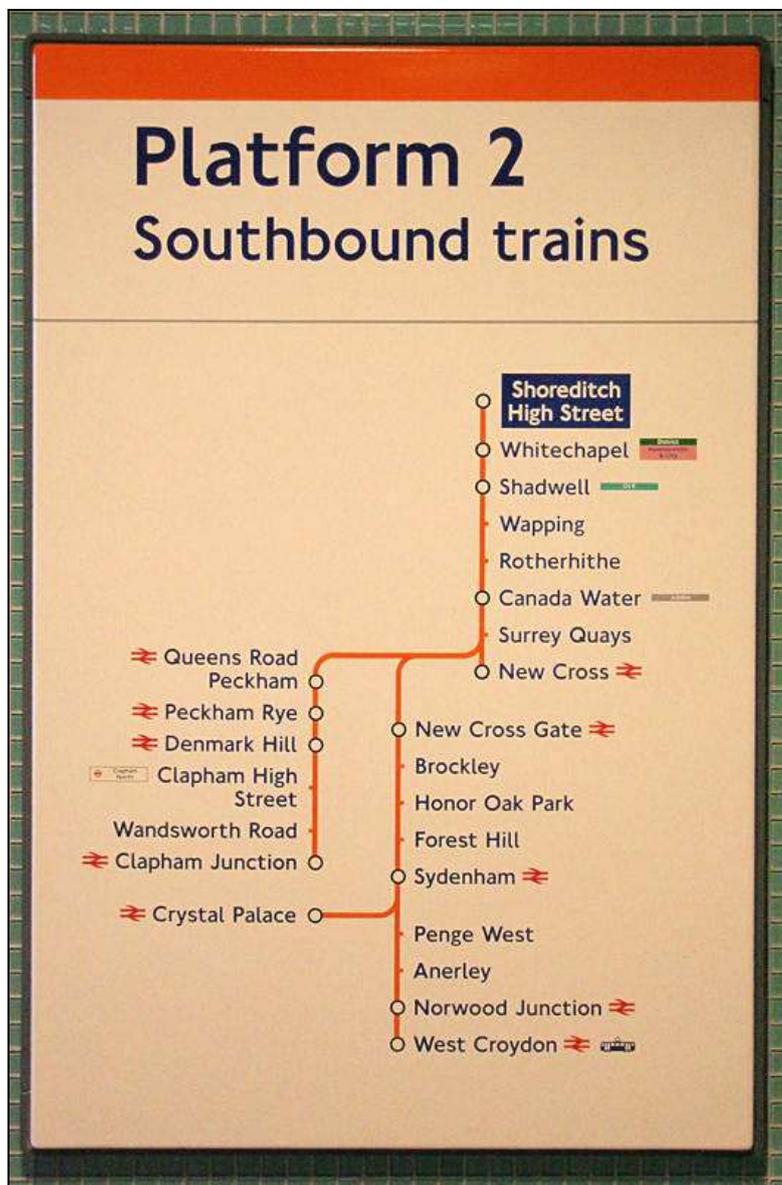
by John Thomason

With contributions from London Reconnections, District Dave, Alan Blake and anonymous

Not previously reported is that the Tower Hamlets bus from Wapping to Surrey Quays picks up at Garnett Street and Butcher Row and in the return direction sets down at Butcher Row and Wapping Health Centre – these changes took effect on 3 November 2008. This popular wheelchair-accessible service may continue after reopening, it is noteworthy that Tower Hamlets operate two other timetabled bus services (IOD1 and IOD2) solely for residents. There has been some concern expressed that withdrawal of the ELW bus will cause inconvenience to residents with shopping trolleys, push chairs, prams and free riders.

The December 2009 issue of *East London Line News* (number 10) was first seen in late February. Subtitled *About to cross the finish line*, this six-page edition is announced as the final issue and has a photographic roundup in colour of key features. There is also a somewhat banal set of 'fast facts' about the new service.

During late February, March and April a series of exercises, some with 'passengers' took place to test emergency procedures. Various unforeseen events are reported to have occurred!



New signs with Overground information started to appear during March. Clapham Junction is shown as one of many termini but Surrey Canal Road is omitted from the route diagrams. It is understood that the signs were ordered before Surrey Canal Road was likely to be funded. Decals were applied in early April obscuring the route diagrams and substituting a diagram showing the service between Dalston Junction and New Cross/New Cross Gate.

The photo (left) was taken at Shoreditch High Street on 9 April 2010.

**Photo: Kim Rennie**

London Reconnections for 16 March has a splendid selection of pictures taken of several station interiors and at New Cross Gate depot during a press facility. It can be seen that stations are more complete and ready for service than has been reported. However, Dalston Junction remains a building site and works continue elsewhere north of Shoreditch. The Press Officer from LOROL suggested that a limited service could start during April.

It has been reported that the northern part of Wheler Street (which passes under Shoreditch High Street Station) is to be renamed Braithwaite Street.

This is in honour of both the arches and the man who designed them. It also appears that the Broad Street Station War Memorial, currently lurking in Richmond Station car park, is to be relocated to the front of Hoxton Station complete with a rededication ceremony. On 12/13 March tours of the Thames Tunnel were organised at eight-days notice in conjunction with the Fancy Fair

held at the Brunel Engine House to wind up the East Festival. Publicity and ticket ordering were somewhat confused but your reporter managed to obtain a ticket. Groups of 20 left at 15-minute intervals from Rotherhithe – it is understood that stewards were drawn from a pool of TfL/LU/LO volunteers and blue badge guides. A comprehensive tour lasting 30-minutes was given and it was possible to view the refurbished Rotherhithe station. Over 1,500 are reported to have taken part. The large plaque erected by the American Civil Engineers at the north end of the station has been removed, whereabouts now uncertain. There was extensive media coverage of the event, which attracted large numbers of ticket-less visitors who were unable to visit the tunnel but were able to attend the Fancy Fair and tour the shaft. Funding came from a last-minute Museums Libraries Archives grant. A more detailed account was in May's *Underground News* (pages 332-334).

There are reports that a 15-train test service was operated on 21 March, including Crystal Palace. The VDU information screens at Surrey Quays on 22 March were displaying a service between Dalston Junction and New Cross/Gate.



New Cross [old] Depot has been demolished. It will be recalled that at one time the depot was earmarked for possible stabling sidings. Future use is unclear given the inaccessibility of the site. The photographs (*above*) were taken on 8 April 2010 with that (*left*) showing that tracks still remain in the 'throat' although not connected to the single line, while the photo (*right*) shows the rubble left after the depot buildings had been demolished but with two concrete buffer stops defiantly remaining.

**Both photos: Brian Hardy**

The Commissioner's Report for 24 March reports that the contract for the detailed design of the new 1.3 km rail link between the existing South London Line and Surrey Quays has been awarded to Mott Macdonald. The OJEU notice for the main construction contract will be issued at the end of March, with construction work likely to start in the final quarter of 2010 [later: start date is confirmed as 29 October, with completion 14 September 2011]. A commitment from the DfT for an additional £7m funding contribution towards a new station at Surrey Canal Road station has still not yet been received, although a contribution from the London Borough of Lewisham of £3m as part of its LIPs has been agreed. However, TfL understands the Minister of State for Transport has concerns that the case for the station is overly reliant on a single planning application, which has not yet been submitted for approval by the developer to the London Borough of Lewisham. The DfT has also questioned the station's demand projections. [It has been reported in *News Shopper* for 27 March that 1.3 million passenger journeys per year are expected]. These issues will be further discussed between the DfT, TfL and LBL. The timing of DfT's contribution is now critical to enable more than passive provision.

A very large gang of contractors arrived at Canada Water towards the end of March to strip out the hoardings and other equipment separating the ELR from LUL. HERAS fencing was placed on the platforms so enabling views of test trains from the public area adjacent to the southbound platform. The opportunity was taken to deep clean those areas of the station that have been out of use. Reports began to circulate suggesting that a gradual reopening between Dalston Junction

and New Cross/New Cross Gate would start during April on Monday to Friday only between 07.00 and 20.00 (although one source suggested 06.00 to 22.00), providing that snagging works and formalities are completed – 12 April seemed to be the most likely date. Other reports suggest empty running north of Shoreditch High Street from 8 April or a start on the 18 April – we shall see! Later it seems that the Mayor will formally open the service on 15 April. LUL staff at ELR stations have been advised that a special Overground service on Marathon Sunday (25 April) is planned. However, the *Road Closed Ahead* leaflet distributed to Marathon route residents shows Wapping, Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays as closed. TfL's leaflet *Marathon fever* makes no mention of those stations but the print date (February) may be pertinent. *The Wharf* for 1 April reports that the re-opening will take place in mid-April and that the new trains cost £261 million. The *Evening Standard* for 8 April carries a lengthy, illustrated article *Going Overground* previewing the new service – several errors were noted.

Bus spider maps were reissued showing new ELR stations with the National Railway double arrow symbol during April bearing a print date of 4/4/2010. Google Maps showed appropriate ELR stations with the double arrow symbol from about the same time and District trains started to announce the change to Overground services at Whitechapel. LFB boxes were fitted at stations in early April [LFB boxes contain station plans for the use of the London Fire Brigade].

An extraordinary self-powered, stair-climbing, wheelchair carrying equipment was noted at Surrey Quays on 13 April. A pair of these was being used for staff training in evacuating mobility-impaired passengers. Not immediately apparent is the large sliding window for extra ingress/egress for football traffic complete with oyster reader.

Lewisham's Cabinet Meeting on 14 April became a key event in establishing precisely what the status of Surrey Canal Road is. Their written report confirms that an agreement was reached and presented to the DfT in December for approval. Since then, however the DfT had been expected to take a decision on whether to release the £7m contribution set aside for the station in December or January, but this has not been taken, despite detailed demand analysis by TfL based on the planned development in north Lewisham which will substantially increase demand for the station. Lewisham has been working with Renewal and Millwall FC on comprehensive regeneration of the area around the proposed Surrey Canal Road station. This is a major regeneration scheme, and is one of the reasons why officers have pressed for approval of Surrey Canal Road station. Because of the tight timescale for the delivery of the East London Line phase 2, TfL and their consultants Mott MacDonald are proceeding with the detailed design of the railway, which includes some elements to facilitate the station, should it be approved.

Officers have looked at the proposed design of the railway and have identified several issues that need to be addressed, whether or not the station is approved, to ensure that the railway is fully integrated with the surrounding area. These are principally about east-west pedestrian movements. Part of the problem is that substantive work on the station design has not started and cannot start until funding is identified. The implications of the above and the current situation surrounding the station are laid out in the report:

Because the DfT funding has not been resolved, it has been impossible to make progress on the terms of an agreement with TfL in the absence of greater certainty about the cost of the station which could range between £7m and £10m. If DfT approve their funding, TfL will need to design the station to an extremely tight timetable to catch up with the schedule for construction of the East London Line Phase 2. It will be necessary to reach timely agreement with TfL on Lewisham's contribution and the terms of funding.

Because of the local elections it is very likely that the timescale for obtaining a Mayor and Cabinet decision would be incompatible with TfL's design and procurement process and could jeopardise the station being built. TfL and Lewisham therefore face a tricky situation – they cannot build the station without the DfT funding, but work also has to begin now, or the station will become too expensive to build at all.

This is a situation that Lewisham's Mayor and Cabinet seemed well aware of, as well as the added implication that a change of government will mean big changes at the DfT. Their frustration was clear. One positive did, however, emerge from the meeting. Not only did the Mayor and Cabinet

sign off on all the arrangements that *have* been concluded, but Lewisham also took a rather brave step – they have agreed to commit £200,000 to fund the design work even without the required DfT approval.

This is a major step forward – it means that Mott Macdonald can at least begin designing the station – but it is also a major gamble. As the report again makes clear: In the absence of any final commitment from DfT it is possible that the proposed station may not be built. Anything spent towards the station before such commitment may therefore turn out to be wasted. However, if design work is not undertaken very soon it may become impossible to add the station to the line at this stage. Constructing a new station after the line goes live would be significantly more expensive than the current estimate of a maximum of £10m. Members are therefore placed in a difficult dilemma. Spending money on design works now may prove to be a waste of up to £200,000 which could have otherwise been spent on the normal LIP programme of infrastructure works.

*The great and the good along with the press assembled at Dalston Junction at 10am on 15 April to launch the extended East London Line then the party moved off in unit 378.135 to Shoreditch High Street for a publicity event. The public introductory service started from Dalston Junction, New Cross and New Cross Gate shortly after noon with a 15-minute service to/from each branch: 12.05 Dalston – New Cross, 12.12 Dalston – New Cross Gate, 12.10 New Cross Gate – Dalston & 12.18 New Cross – Dalston. Well, that was the plan but a class 378 camera/monitor interface software problem caused delay. Bombardier staff at Dalston and New Cross Gate had been asking drivers if the CCTV has worked as expected for each trip. There have been a few issues where it stops working on the entire train or just on one particular coach and is cured by shutting down and reopening the desk or cutting the auxiliaries and firing the unit up from scratch. Fall-out from the forthcoming election purdah period suggested that the formal reopening should, in any case, be deferred until after the elections in May. There was now an aspiration to start the introductory service on 19 or 20 April.*

The *Evening Standard* for 15 April carried the story under the banner “Boris accused of election stunt over rail line opening”. *Hackney Gazette* 24 reported that Hackney residents expecting to see trains running at Dalston Junction that morning instead walked into a furious political row. Mayor of London Boris Johnson was expected to open the line but residents were met at 07.30 by Ken Livingstone, Diane Abbot, and Tessa Jowell, handing out leaflets at the station informing people of Labour's involvement in the project. A spokesman for TfL said the cancellation was for operational reasons.

Visits on 16 April to Surrey Quays and New Cross Gate showed timetables for the introductory service displayed. Staff opined that the service would be open on Monday or Tuesday or Thursday! Staff elsewhere said that the service would start in two-weeks time, initially serving Surrey Quays and Shadwell with an additional station being opened every day. The HERAS fencing at Canada Water isolating Overground from Underground was removed ready for start of traffic on 19 April. The blue hoardings at Whitechapel were also removed but although trains were running platform access was taped off at both stations. There have been reports that a number of unintentional passengers arrived at yet-to-open stations on that day. A suggestion made was that they had boarded a test run at Brockley expecting to travel to London Bridge. Enquiries on 20 April found tight-lipped staff stating that opening would be in May. By 21 April Overground booking halls were open for dissemination of information and charging of Oyster cards, Canada Water's Jubilee Line lift now called at the ELL southbound platform and Jubilee and District Line trains announced change for London Overground but still no sign of the introductory service. The Overground contact poster was displayed by 22 April at Canada Water. An internal document confirmed that the ELW bus would run until 9 May. It is a reasonable conclusion that rail services could start by early May, however an e-mail from Overground Customer Services anticipated a start date of 28 April.

It is unfortunate that although stations were open for the London Marathon on 25 April and although trains were running they could not be used. Overground staff had the unenviable task of explaining to the deluge of potential passengers why they could not travel on the trains clearly displayed on the departure screen and visible through the windows, a situation aggravated by the closure for crowd control purposes of Canada Water.

Word started to circulate around lunchtime on 26 April that the preview service would start on 27 April at noon. The first trains were expected to be 12.05 Dalston – New Cross, 12.12 Dalston – New Cross Gate, 12.10 New Cross Gate – Dalston and 12.18 New Cross – Dalston, with the service ceasing about 19.00. The gates at Dalston Junction were opened at 11.30 and non-political speeches were made by the great and the good. The first train, with an appropriate headboard was formed with unit 378.152. From 28 April services were expected from about 07.00 to 20.00, with no weekend service. Large numbers of enthusiasts, locals and the curious were in evidence on the trains and stations for the first preview services that ran largely as expected. The TfL on-line and poster maps reflected the new arrangements. Meanwhile it was announced that the ELW bus replacement service would continue to run until end of service on Friday 30 April and the weekend bus service would continue until Sunday 9 May – it seems that the weekend preview service will start in mid-May.