

## FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP, and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

**06.10.11 NEW CIVIL ENGINEER** – Construction of the first Crossrail tunnel portal – at Royal Oak Common near Paddington – was completed this month. A Skanska/Costain joint venture began construction of the portal in January 2010. The site has been handed over to the Bam Nuttall/Ferrovial Agroman(UK)/Keir Construction joint venture which will construct a tunnel between Royal Oak and Farringdon.

**20.10.11 NEW CIVIL ENGINEER** – Consultants could be forced to take more responsibility for any cost or time overruns on London’s £14.5 billion Crossrail project under proposals put forward by contractor Costain, who has urged client Crossrail to bring its designers into the pain/gain share arrangements with its contractors to better engage them contractor-proposed design changes. Designers on the project were appointed by the client, with contractors asked to price work based on approved designs. Once appointed, contractors enter an optimised contractor involvement process to value engineer the designs.

**02.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Two new Underground stations are coming to Vauxhall and Battersea, plugging the Nine Elms regeneration zone into the Underground network for the first time. With regeneration forecast to bring 25,000 jobs and 16,000 new homes, the new public transport link is a vital piece of infrastructure, helping to open up a central riverside neighbourhood blighted by industrial uses for 60 years. Planning permission has been given for an extension of the Northern Line from Kennington and the stations, Nine Elms and Battersea, could be open by 2015. An interchange at Vauxhall is being considered, too, while a longer term objective is to extend to Clapham Junction.

**02.11.11 METRO** – Underground station electronic service boards have been improved across the network to show clearer and more extensive travel information. The new-look design groups disrupted lines together at the top of the screen so passengers can see at a glance if their journey is likely to be affected.

**04.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The 1957 Overground service to Watford Junction has become the unlikely setting for one of the world’s most unusual marriage proposals. Commuters were stunned when a full choir broke into song as the packed commuter train left Euston. Midway through the rendition of Bill Withers’ hit Lovely Day, Adam King got down on one knee to propose to his amazed girlfriend Lucy Rogers, who promptly burst into tears and said “yes”. A video of the proposal – complete with a romantic opening sequence – has now become an online hit on YouTube.

**04.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Transport bosses were condemned today for closing large parts of the network on the second Remembrance Sunday in a row. Thousands of serving and ex-service men and women will converge on central London for the Festival of Remembrance and Cenotaph Ceremony next Sunday. Six Underground lines will be part suspended, the DLR will be shut all weekend and there will be restricted services on the London Overground. Last year TfL was criticised for closing or part-closing 9 of 11 routes on Remembrance Sunday. An LU spokesman said anyone with a disability who “really needs assistance to get to services should contact us and we will get them there”.

**04.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – 3 out of 4 Underground trains will be able to operate without drivers 2018, TfL directors have been told. These include trains on all lines except Piccadilly, Bakerloo and Waterloo & City. The TfL board said that after delivery of the S Stock is delivered it is “unlikely” that Underground bosses “will ever again buy a fleet of passenger trains with conventional drivers’ cabs”.

**08.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Driverless Underground trains could be running on trial by 2015 – three years sooner than expected, LU documents revealed today. The Waterloo & City Line will be tested first, followed by Bakerloo, Piccadilly and Central lines. It “provides an opportunity to transform LU operation enabled by technology”. The plan for driverless trains and whole scale changes to LU will now form a major campaign issue in the run-up to the mayoral election. Changes have led to union claim of stations being left unstaffed. Mayoral candidate Ken Livingstone pledged “there will be a driver in every train and staff at every station”, if he is re-elected. RMT would lead the “most strenuous and high profile campaign” against the “reckless gamble” to change the Underground.

**08.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – A violent computer game that includes a terrorist attack on the Underground, today broke all records by shifting more than 9 million pre-sale copies. Hundreds of gamers queued in Oxford Street until midnight to buy “Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3” in London’s biggest computer game launch. The London episode is chillingly realistic, especially when the action moves to the Underground. The players are on the back of trucks chasing trains which have been boarded by terrorists, and everything from the detail of the trains to the scream of the commuters as you hurtle through stations feels eerily accurate.

**09.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The number of people attempting suicide on the Underground has soared over the last 10 years. TfL figures show 80 people threw themselves in front of Underground trains last year compared with 46 in 2000 – a rise of 74% in a decade. Underground passengers have suffered a total of 29 days of delays in the last 10 years because of people killing themselves across the network. The worst affected station was King’s Cross St. Pancras with 18 suicides over the last decade. The next highest was Mile End.

**10.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – More than 300 of the capital’s most famous landmarks are being broken into at night by groups of “urban explorers”. London is the epicentre of the rapidly growing global movement, described as the practice of entering unseen or off limits areas for the thrill of discover. It is likely that there could be over 3,000 in Britain. The Met Police refused to comment on their activities, but their involvement seems limited to one occasion in April last year when 4 men were arrested exploring disused Underground stations.

**10.11.11 METRO** – Thousands of Underground passengers were stranded when Jubilee Line went into meltdown. Packed trains ground to a halt, many in tunnels, as drivers were told to take control and guide them to the nearest station. The line suffered a “total communications systems failure” during an evening rush hour. Screens in the control room went blank for almost an hour. LU blamed a software problem and stressed that at “no point” were commuters at risk. The RMT union described Friday evening’s incident as a “major emergency”.

**10.11.11 METRO** – Muswell Hill is an aspirational sort of place. People move there because it’s where they want to be – not because they cannot afford more expensive Highgate, Hampstead or Islington. The only amenity Muswell Hill lacks is an Underground station. However Highgate and East Finchley Northern Line stations are only a mile away, and frequent buses to other Underground stations including Finsbury Park for the Piccadilly and Victoria lines.

**10.11.11 METRO** – All 269 open Underground stations have received “secure station” accreditation from the DfT and BTP. The stations were each given this status after BTP’s crime-reduction experts carried out a rigorous assessment before making recommendation to the DfT. The scheme has four principal criteria to gain accreditation: Design of the station, Management of the station, Management of, and response to, crime, and Passengers perceptions of security.

**11.11.11 WATFORD OBSERVER** – The final decision on the Croxley Rail Link is just four weeks away which connects the Metropolitan Line at Croxley to Watford Junction. It will start by crossing a colossal railway bridge and then run along Watford Road, the Grand Union Canal and through West Watford where two new stations will be built at Ascot Road and Vicarage Road (for the Football Ground and the Watford General Hospital).

**11.11.11 WATFORD OBSERVER** – Letter to Editor – It beggars belief that planners are still pressing ahead with the Croxley Rail Link. The closure of Watford Metropolitan line station will leave hundreds – if not thousands – on the Cassiobury Estates (not to mention the pupils at Watford Boys Grammar school, students at West Herts College, concertgoers attending the Colosseum, visitors to Cassiobury Park) without a transport hub.

**14.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Underground train drivers are threatening Christmas strike chaos – after demanding £350 for working on Boxing Day. Members of ASLEF, which controls more than half of LU 3,200 drivers, have warned of walkouts that could include Christmas Eve or Boxing Day. Business leaders accused ASLEF of “holding London to ransom”. An ASLEF source said, “We are only talking about Boxing Day here. We want to meet and thrash this out but LU won’t do that”. LU said, “LU has a long-standing agreement with all trade unions which cover staff working arrangements on bank holidays, and Boxing Day is included in that agreement”.

**14.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The privately funded Northern Line extension from Kennington to Battersea is going to bring untold riches to the unassuming part of S.W.8 – new jobs, new parks, bikes and boats, palaces in the sky. But there is a catch. The route is going under and through densely populated residential areas – including private, council and social properties – rather than the industrial redevelopment zones at Nine Elms, causing massive disruption. The developer says it will try to put the ventilation or “intervention” shafts in places like the garages behind houses. A more logical Underground route from Vauxhall to Battersea Power Station, via industrial and commercial areas due to be redeveloped and following existing overland lines, has been dismissed as too costly and complex. For whom, precisely?

**15.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The MD of LU said trains without drivers were perfectly safe – and promised a “hearts and minds” campaign to win over Underground staff. He said, “the technology does exist, Paris is running Line 14 fully automatically and Sao Paulo a deep level tube is fully automatic. I don’t believe that they are any less reliable or less safe”. The first trials for driverless trains would take place in 2015 on the Waterloo & City Line. RMT union leader, Bob Crow, said his union would mobilise to resist attempts to remove drivers from trains.

**15.11.11 METRO** – Artwork by acclaimed artist Michael Landy has been integrated into seating fabric on Central line trains. The new Tube seats, part of the revamp to the Central line fleet, feature red figures and the words “self” and “other” from Landy’s “Acts of Kindness” project. This work has been based on stories submitted by passengers and staff.

**16.11.11 METRO** – There was a rare opportunity to sample Underground history when the disused Aldwych Underground station was opened to the public during November and December. The famous station, which has featured in blockbusters such as *Atonement* and *V for Vendetta*, was used as a public air raid shelter during WW2. It was originally named Strand as it was built on the site of the theatre, but later became Aldwych which means “old village”.

**18.11.11 THE GUARDIAN** – According to campaign group *Transport for All*, nearly 80% of Underground stations are not fully accessible, including some Olympic venues, while the everyday experience of wheelchair users is one of being unable to board buses and being ignored by taxis. A total of 63 Underground stations have step-free access with two more due to be ready for the Olympics. There are 8,500 low-floor buses fitted with wheelchair ramps and onboard visual and audio announcements.

**22.11.11 METRO** – Latest figures show that Underground services continue to improve as the number of people using the network rises. In July alone the network carried the highest ever number of passengers in a four-week period at 90.6 million. Mike Brown, MD of LU said, “These figures show that the long term trend of improving reliability on the Tube is continuing, alongside the range of improvements we are making to Londoner’s journeys through new trains, signalling, track and upgraded stations”.

**23.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – A ticket to see Katherine Jenkins could set you back more than £100 – and would not guarantee you an audience with the singer afterwards. But she astonished Underground commuters at Leicester Square station with a 45 minute performance that made only £16 in loose change. The star moved some people to tears with a set that included her biggest hits. Disguised in a brown wig, ripped jumper, jeans and boots, she caused many a double take as commuters failed at first to realise who she was, while others turned back to hear her. The Welsh singer had never busked before yesterday’s stunt, for a feature in the *ES Magazine*. Jenkins gave the £16 raised to a homelessness charity.

**23.11.11 METRO** – TfL Lost Property Office (LPO) is donating hundreds of lost toys to the Salvation Army to give to disadvantaged children over Christmas. Paul Cowan, manager of the LPO said, “Pre-loved items are donated to our charity partners on a regular basis, however new toys and gifts are saved until the end of the year, when their donation has a much greater impact”. The items, ranging from soft animals and board games to sports equipment, are suitable for children of all ages. The LPO handled more than 200,000 items of lost property in 2010/11, and reunited on average one in three with its owner.

**25.11.11 BUILDING MAGAZINE** – A contract worth up to £400m has been awarded for the Crossrail station at Farringdon to joint venture between Bam Nuttall, Ferrovial-Agroman (UK) and Keir Construction; also one worth £110m for works at Whitechapel station to the consortium between Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall and Vinci Construction. Crossrail said “intensive construction” will get underway early in 2012.

**25.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Underground engineers will be rushed across London by police cars with their sirens blaring in a bid to keep trains running during the Olympics. TfL emergence responders will be given “blue light status” to greatly decrease the time it takes to fix a failed train. Under the plans BTP vehicles will either escort a TfL vehicle or pick up engineers to ferry them to the site of a failure. The project is being tested now and will be rolled out in February.

**28.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The planned Nine Elms development costing between £750m and £950m would include an extension to the Northern Line, which would run from Kennington to new stations at Nine Elms and Battersea, and would form an extension of the Charing Cross branch. Completion of this would bring Nine Elms within 11 minutes’ journey time of the West End and the City. The Chancellor, George Osborne, wants the deal struck by 2013, ready for construction to begin in 2015.

**29.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – The Underground runs to a set timetable, leading to those baffling announcements that your train will be held because it is running ahead of schedule. Moscow’s metro systems runs not on a timetable, but “to headway”, with simply a set interval between trains. Partly as a result, it reaches 40 trains per hour on its lines in rush hours. Recently the Jubilee Line had just managed 30 trains an hour (its target is 27).

**29.11.11 METRO** – A new green wall designed to trap pollution has been unveiled at Edgware Road Underground station. The 200 square-metre structure took a month to install and stands adjacent to Marylebone Road. The installation utilises the potential of plants and trees to trap pollution and features 15 plant varieties crafted into a multicoloured design. There are also 50 planted towers in Upper Thames Street and the introduction of 500 additional trees across the capital is under way.

**30.11.11 EVENING STANDARD** – Underground and rail travellers will routinely wait at least half an hour to board trains at “hotspot” stations during peak hours at the Olympics. Passengers will be held in lengthy queues or will have to walk to alternative stations. Detailed forecasts of public transport and road demand during the Games published anticipated waiting time at about half of the 60 Underground stations it says will be most affected, when there will be an additional 1m extra journeys a day. London Bridge will be the most affected, but other “hotspots” will be Bank, Bond Street, Canary Wharf and Canada Water. TfL bosses admit that disruption will be much worse if they cannot achieve a 20% reduction in commuter passenger journeys during the Games. Volunteers will be situated at hotspot stations issuing travel advice and walking maps.