

EAST LONDON LINE POST-CLOSURE NOTES – 5

by John Thomason

With contributions from Google Groups, londonconnectionsblogspot, Mackenzieblu and anonymous.

Construction News for 12 June reports some information over the final stages of phase one of the East London Railway. The £6.5m Dalston Curve job is up for grabs – what's new from the article is that the plan is to put tracks from Whitechapel to Highbury & Islington, but then keep them going to have reversing platforms at Camden Road. This seems to be something new but maybe this has been misreported. Also mentioned is the £100m four-tracking of the North London Line from Stratford to Gospel Oak. Also mentioned is that the line is at capacity on this 11-station section and works include platform lengthening and loops. Funded by DfT, the idea is to run longer [passenger] trains, which are likely to be the 4-car units already ordered by TfL.

TfL Board Papers for 25 June record that the first section of new slab track for the East London Line extension was laid on 12 April. It has been reported that the ventilation shafts between Shadwell and Wapping & Rotherhithe and Surrey Quays will be used to pump concrete to track level.

The Society received an enquiry from the Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate Link Inspector to the East London Railway Project, concerning two 'signal levers' found on a 'landing platform' in a shaft at Rotherhithe. On a 'plate' at the back of the signal quadrants there appears to be a legend which reads 'SD (or B). 90 MET RY.'. A Google search found mention of signals being controlled locally for floodgates.

Enquiries of Mike Horne produced the following information: The floodgates at Rotherhithe were physically installed in August 1939 and seem to have been commissioned on the night of 30 March 1940. They were hand worked for the first month, then power operated. Like other gates, operation interrupted signalling circuits to prevent trains approaching them when closed. As far as I can understand the instruction to close the gates was given by the control office via special circuits that illuminated signs at the gate control positions and at relevant signal cabins. The signalmen were supposed to stop the service on the route approaching the gate and when the gate controller saw from the local diagram that there were no trains in the area he began the closure process which illuminated special signs at the X signals in advance which would return to danger automatically (it was not possible to close the gates if the approach tracks were occupied).

Assuming this standard arrangement was in force at Rotherhithe, I can't see that any question arises about the use of any mechanical lever frame. There were no floodgates in Metropolitan Railway days. So where is it from? Is it a ground frame? It's not Deptford Road Junction (which was 4 levers), or Surrey Docks, which was 6. There was an LNER ground frame at Whitechapel sidings, I think, of at least 5 levers. There was a ground frame at New Cross of 2 levers (one 'king' and one points), but no others. I note the levers are both red in the photo (very unlikely you'd have a ground frame of *just* signal levers). It may be part of a larger frame, but generally these were individual lever quadrants, and it doesn't have that look. The ELR was signalled by Saxby & Farmer on behalf of the LBSCR, initially on a preliminary basis, but done more systematically by 1876. Rotherhithe would have had two light-only signals on each line, 50 yards short of the platform, the upper

being the stop signal and the lower the distant. On the platform was a starter. This implies at least a 6-lever frame, but it would probably have been more in practice. The SER took over maintenance in 1885 and may then have introduced some of its own kit. The Met. didn't get involved until the 1913 re-signalling. A bit of a mystery but perhaps one of our readers knows?

Network Rail has awarded Colas Rail a £15-million contract for the West Croydon, Crystal Palace and South Croydon implementation works. This contract is due for completion in February 2009 and will form part of the new East London Line. At Crystal Palace, Colas Rail is responsible for the reinstatement of an island platform and associated changes whilst at West Croydon it will undertake the extension of an existing platform and related work. Although not part of the East London Railway route, a turn-back facility at South Croydon needs to be built to provide operational flexibility to both the East London Railway operator and the existing train operator, Southern Trains. [Presumably for reversal if West Croydon is unavailable – will Overground operate route knowledge workings to South Croydon?].

The East London Line Project submitted a planning application on 7 July to Lewisham Council, concerning the grade-separated junction needed for phase 2 at the Silwood Triangle. The application is for enabling works and comprises a new footbridge connecting Oldfield Grove with Trundley's (*sic*) Terrace, a new underpass for the grade separated junction and associated earthworks, drainage & landscaping. The application explicitly states that funding is awaited for phase 2 itself, although funding has been secured for these enabling works.

At the London Assembly meeting on 16 July Richard Tracey asked "Can the Mayor update the Assembly on what progress is being made regarding funding of Phase 2 of the East London Line Extension?". Boris Johnson replied "TfL is continuing to discuss funding of the East London Line extension to Clapham Junction with the DfT. I met the Secretary of State for Transport, Ruth Kelly, to discuss funding for the project and set out in detail the benefits of delivering this project by December 2011, I am hopeful that a positive conclusion to the negotiations can be reached soon."

Details of the revised ELL replacement bus services that took effect from 19 July were publicised during the previous week. *Metro* for 14 July announced the new arrangements, the information booklet was re-issued but posters were not in evidence until a first sighting outside Rotherhithe station on 19 July. The ELS was withdrawn after the last service on 18 July and replaced by an extension of the ELW from Whitechapel to Shoreditch. ELW service intervals are every 15 minutes on Saturday and Sunday with alternate buses extended to Shoreditch during Sunday market hours. On Monday to Friday the interval is every 10-minutes with every third bus extended to Shoreditch during peak hours – the service deteriorates to every 15-minutes after 22.00. The use of single deck Dart buses with the consequent re-routing southbound from Cable Street to The Highway direct via Cannon Street Road (instead of Dock Street) has reduced the end-to-end journey time.

Also from 19 July further adjustments were made to the ELC to operate a 15-minute service on Saturday and Sunday with a 10-minute service Monday to Friday using six vehicles rather than 10. The through service from Wapping to Shoreditch is promoted as both an improvement and more convenient but with a 30-minute frequency to Shoreditch one wonders what's the point. Will the Shoreditch extension be withdrawn due to lack of demand? It has been reported that during the first few days of operation of the re-routed ELW that insufficient single deck vehicles were available so some double deck DM buses were in use between Wapping and Whitechapel – the routing used was unclear. Numbers of users of the replacement bus services continues to slowly decline, the ELC carrying better loads than the ELW. The Tower Hamlets' bus continues with good loadings.

The revised information booklet is flashed "Update from 19 July 2008" on an orange background. Minor adjustments are made to the diagrams and we are also told that those using PAYG may get a refund if using the 381/N381 as a substitute for ELL connecting journeys. The displaced double-deck buses ex-ELW were noted in operation on Jubilee Line replacement bus services on 19/20 July and those ex-ELC (four fewer vehicles now used) were seen in service on the 188 and 381 still in ELL replacement livery.

Readers are probably aware that the DLR was using just one track between Island Gardens and Lewisham during July and August. Four DLR bus routes provided congestion relief and an informative leaflet was issued. One suggested alternative route for Deptford Bridge was to use the ELW from Deptford High Street to Canada Water. As the ELW calls only at the four Underground stations served, how this was expected to work was unclear – in any case it would probably have been as quick to use the 47 bus to and from Canada Water.

Londonconnectionsblogspot for 19 & 22 July has an interesting set of ELR images taken over the wall, through the fence and from blocks of flats – this site is always worth a visit.

It appears that a leaflet was produced to show alternative ELL routes by foot and cycle. This can be found at –

<http://www.tfl.gov.uk/tfl/corporate/projectsandschemes/networkandservices/eastlondononline/ell-walking-cycling.pdf>

As far as is known this has not been published as a paper document. Interestingly South Bermondsey station is promoted as a walking only alternative to Surrey Quays – leaving a cycle there would be asking for it to be re-cycled!

The third issue of *East London Line News* appeared during July. The timetable of future plans reports various new station construction activity and existing station refurbishment and modification until October. Details are given about the plans for the replacement of Cope Street and Rotherhithe New Road over-bridges, as well as details of closures in the Brick Lane area. There is a retrospective regarding the various bridge installations completed so far.