

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.

28.11.14 WATFORD OBSERVER – Councillors have this week backed a Government minister’s call for a direct train link between Watford and Amersham. South West Herts MP David Gaulk called for a direct link between the Amersham branch and Watford, and claimed travel times between Rickmansworth and Croxley Green to be as low as 3 minutes. Three Rivers District Council passed a motion to support the plan, and its Chief executive will now write to LU outlining the council’s position.

28.11.14 THE TIMES – The cost of Crossrail2 has gone up by more than a third to £27.5B – and the project has not even properly reached the feasibility stage. Crossrail2 is the proposed new link from under-served northeast London through the centre of the capital to the western reaches of the south bank of the Thames, where Underground stations are few and far between. Financial projections by accountants PwC for TfL, put the bill at £27.5B, well above the £20B that early estimates had settled on. The report says a number of funding mechanisms are open to any future London mayor who gives the go-ahead. They include paying back investment through fare revenue, from levying extra business rates, or money from communities that will gain from the infrastructure.

28.11.14 METRO – A man got so fat he was ashamed to travel on the Underground has shed 16st (102kg) in less than a year. Alan Butler used to worry that his 28st (178kg) frame would get him stuck in a rush-hour crush, so travelled to work 3 hours early. He said, “I was so self-conscious of people staring at me – or worse, me not being able to fit in an Underground carriage”. Ashamed, he ditched takeaways for healthy food and started walking every day. After losing 5st (32kg) in two months, he had a £9K stomach reduction surgery in March and now weighs less than 12st (76kg).

28.11.14 METRO – From 28 November until July 2015, major escalator refurbishment work will take place to Brixton Underground station. The two escalators will be taken out of service one at a time, stripped down and rebuilt by hand. During this time, passengers are advised to avoid possible queues at the morning peak by using local buses, Northern Line or Network Rail as alternative routes. The work will ensure the escalators provide a safe and reliable service for many years to come.

28.11.14 METRO – *Did you Know?* – You can now find your nearest bus stop, Underground station, river pier or tram stop from anywhere in the capital by simply using your GPS. By logging on to tfl.gov.uk and clicking the “Nearby” tool, any GPS-enabled device will pinpoint your location and show the nearest public transport options plotted on a map. It will also give live status and departure information.

28.11.14 METRO – The RMT union is threatening a 24-hour Underground strike on the Northern Line on 1 December. TfL is urging the union to call off the strike which concerns the dismissal of an RMT member who failed an alcohol breath test. If the threatened action goes ahead, TfL has plans in place to keep London moving and will update customers as soon as more information is available.

28.11.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Post by Martin Clark* – “The colonnade of Portcullis House serving the main entrance to Westminster Underground station and the adjoining shops has had no lighting for months. There are steps and stairs and it is pitch black at night. It is only a matter of time before someone suffers a serious accident. Even when the system is working, it consists of uplighters that barely light the ceiling above. When Portcullis House opened in 2001, it was a requirement of the brief that the building should set an example in energy-saving. But inadequate lighting at street level takes this just a bit too far”.

December 2014 – SOUTHWARK POST – Local Liberal Democrat MP Simon Hughes has thrown his weight behind calls to extend the Bakerloo Line. The MP, who successfully fought for two new stations on the Jubilee Line to be built at Bermondsey and Southwark, is calling for the Mayor of London and TfL to extend the Bakerloo Line beyond Elephant & Castle. He said, “After many years of talking about a Bakerloo Line extension, the time has come for the Mayor of London to put his money where his mouth is and make it happen. Like many residents and businesses in Southwark, I want to see a two-branch extension both down the Old Kent road and down the Walworth Road to Camberwell. Not only would this improve public transport in these parts of our borough but would also bring huge economic benefits. I am fighting for two Underground stations on the Old Kent Road and to make it happen quickly. This will connect our area even more to the Jubilee and Overground lines”.

01.12.14 THE TIMES – The Heathrow Express (HEX) is preparing to defend its turf against the arrival of Crossrail. In four years, the new east-west Crossrail trains will be delivering tens of thousands of passengers a day to Heathrow. HEX trains, which take 15 minutes and costs £21 a time, is preparing a fight to prevent it becoming obsolete. It has already begun a marketing campaign, saying that the only alternatives are taxis, which typically are three times as expensive and take three times as long. It says that Crossrail is likely to be hugely crowded and will not offer a guaranteed seat, newspaper, on-board staff or in-travel lavatory. Now the HEX has signed a deal with British Airways, as part of an expanding plan to tie in as many carriers as possible to offer their passengers onward travel. Combination fares are being launched next week for travel from 11 stations, including Penzance, Swansea and Oxford.

01.12.14 METRO – There is planned RMT strike action on the Northern Line today. If it goes ahead, LU will try to run a good service on the Northern Line but there may be some disruption. Other Underground and rail services will operate normally. The strike action by the RMT leadership comes after one of its members was dismissed for failing an alcohol breath test.

01.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – LU said it was operating a good service on the Northern Line today despite a strike by drivers after one of them was sacked for allegedly failing an alcohol breath test. Members of RMT union walked out at 04.30 for a 24-hour strike over the case, but LU's Phil Hufton said, "This strike is inappropriate and will achieve nothing whatsoever".

02.12.14 TIME OUT – *Word on the Street* – "I love the DLR. It's like what people in the past though the future would look like".

02.12.14 METRO – Pick up the latest pocket Underground map and you will see some new abstract artwork from French artist Daniel Buren. Using the Underground's iconic roundel symbol, the artist has designed a unique piece of art by layering, rotating and repeating the logo to create a lattice framework in red and blue. The artwork represents the numerous journeys made on the network by one single person. The cover was commissioned by *Art on the Underground* and has been developed into a large poster which is currently being displayed on the Underground. A permanent piece of artwork by Buren will be unveiled at the newly upgraded Tottenham Court Road station in 2015.

02.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Post by Simon Green* – "The Piccadilly Line is now overrun with travellers going to or coming from Heathrow with large bags – all day. Even around 15.00 it is usually full with no seats when it passes Northfields going eastbound. Boris and First Great Western should work to offer standard class Heathrow Express passengers the same fare as on the Underground. The novelty of a 15-minute airport service has long worn off. Let's limit the full fare to a different class ticket and get the masses into London in a convenient way".

03.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – You'd think he'd be able to afford a taxi but Hollywood star Tom Cruise was seen rubbing shoulders with commuters during the chilly morning rush-hour yesterday. The youthful-looking 52-year-old was spotted running around Piccadilly Circus during filming for upcoming blockbuster *Mission Impossible 5*. Cruise darted around the Underground station and past the statue of Eros during an action scene. The film is set to be released on Boxing Day 2015.

03.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Letter by P. Corver* – "London Bridge station is closed to Thameslink and Southern services between 20 December and 4 January. I have been looking at my alternative route to work in the City. The obvious one pointed out on the Southern website is to get a train to Victoria, then the Underground. But TfL advises that there will be no District or Circle Line at Victoria 26-31 December. What are TfL or Network Rail doing about it? It was suggested to me that I change at Balham and get the Northern Line to London Bridge. So every few minutes a train full of commuters will offload at Balham and head to the Northern Line? It doesn't bear thinking about".

04.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – Five LU lines will be spared weekend closures for more than three months to allow for the smooth introduction of Night Tube. The 24-hour weekend services will begin from the early hours of Saturday 12 September 2015 on the Northern, Jubilee, Piccadilly, Victoria and Central lines. The moratorium on maintenance will start during the following week and last until Christmas. Details of the "no closure period" are included in the *Change Assurance Plan for Night Tube*. LU said, "In the busy run-up to Christmas each year we minimise work across the network, and will be looking to do that again in 2015, particularly in light of the launch of the Night Tube – maintenance and upgrade works will be planned to take place between Sunday and Thursday night". Meanwhile the ASLEF union has accused LU bosses of dragging their heels over rostering the Night Tube. Arrangements for 24-hour running will form part of the pay negotiations that need to be settled

by next summer. ASLEF said it had concerns over safety and members' welfare if they have to work more unsocial hours.

05.12.14 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by Nick Lincoln (see December Underground News, page 647)* – “Reference letter by Carl Scleater about planned closure of Watford Met. station, which makes reference to the fact that, if the station remains in situ, it would help alleviate some of the pressures on Watford’s commuters when (if) the HS2 redevelopment of Euston commences. People living in Watford may think HS2 is a problem only for those living further west than us. However, the Euston redevelopment will take a decade, according to official reports – unofficially, I have heard it is likely to be 15 years or so before it is complete. During that time there will be reduced services into and out of Euston. So for up to a decade and a half it will be chaotic for the thousands of people who commute from Watford Junction to London on a daily basis. If Watford commuters think the rush hour trains are crowded, you ain’t seen nothing yet”.

05.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – Londoners will face longer queues for the Underground at Euston station as it struggles to cope with a surge of passengers from Britain’s new high-speed rail line. TfL’s MD of Planning Michele Dix, in evidence to the Lords’ Economic affairs Committee, stressed there could be delays getting onto the Underground once HS2 is extended in a second phase to serve northern England – unless Crossrail2 was already operating in the capital. Particularly with Phase 2 of HS2, the volume of people arriving at Euston will exceed capacity on the Underground lines even after all the upgrades that were going through. She said, “We have argued that Crossrail2 needs to be opened before HS2 Phase 2 goes live in 2033, in order to help with that dispersal”. She also stressed the importance of avoiding a “fragmented” approach to modernising Euston, highlighting the need for a direct link to Euston Square so rail passengers could use the Hammersmith & City and Circle lines.

08.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – A woman has told of a four-year battle to clear her name after receiving court summonses and demands for more than £1,500 in Underground fare evasion fines after her identity was stolen. Emily Matthews was dragged to court twice over unpaid penalty charge notices after LU claimed she had travelled without a ticket. Both cases were dropped – in one case, her passport proved she was in Goa at the time, and in the other, the investigating officer realised outside court that she was not the person he had stopped.

08.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Post by Kevin May (see 02.12.14 above)* – “French artist Daniel Buren’s new Underground map cover design is a dense jumble of LU logos, representing the numerous journeys made by one commuter. I suspect he is actually a regular on the Northern Line, expressing the chaotic crush of the wretched masses through art”.

12.12.14 METRO – From Sunday 14 December, timetable changes will boost Overground services across the network. Four extra trains will be added to the Gospel Oak – Barking line to help relieve congestion at peak times. Four services on the East London Line will also be extended so that they terminate at the interchange at Highbury & Islington, rather than at Dalston Junction. These improvements are in addition to the 5-carriage trains which are now being introduced to the network. The new carriages are joining the East London routes and have space for an extra 170 passengers in each carriage, adding 25% more capacity to the network.

19.12.14 WATFORD OBSERVER – The rising cost of the Croxley Rail Link has forced the Government to step in and ask LU to take on an “enhanced role” in the construction of the project. The project is now expected to cost £230M – almost double the original. Hertfordshire County Council and LU are discussing who will be responsible for specific aspects of the project, but they could take over construction next year, though the rail provider stressed no decision has been made yet.

19.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Post by LF* – “Why can’t National Rail and LU communicate? Two nights ago, I left the Jubilee Line at London Bridge, was sent around the Shard and through a maze to the concourse to find every train delayed or cancelled. Why aren’t we told as we get off the Underground so we can make alternative arrangements, which would ease congestion is it too difficult to get a message down a couple of escalators”.

22.12.14 THE TIMES – Police have put up a sign in Romanian in one of Britain’s busiest shopping districts to deter pickpockets. The placard, outside Covent Garden Underground station, states, “*Ofiteri de politie in civil operaeza zona*” – “*Plainclothes police officers operating in this area*”. BTP figures in January showed that half of the 170 individuals convicted of pick-pocketing on the Underground were of Romanian descent.

24.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – Two Cartier watches and an oboe were among the lost items that earned TfL almost £300K this year. More than 260,000 items were left on the transport network between January and October this year – largest number for years. Over the same period 4,292 unclaimed items were auctioned of raising £296,327 for TfL. TfL says it does not profit from the proceeds. Instead, the income subsidises the cost of running its Baker Street Lost Property Office(LPO), now in its 80th year. In 2013, 6,027 items were auctioned, raising £488,554. The items that went for the biggest sums at auction were a Canon EOS digital camera and lens for £2,301, a Cabart oboe for £599, a ladies Cartier Panthere wristwatch with a case and bracelet for £1,480 and another ladies Cartier watch for £600. Six of the top 10 most expensive auction items were Apple laptops, which cost up to £1,599 new, were sold for up to £650 each – after any personal data had been wiped. More than 80% of items unclaimed by owners after 3 months are given to charities such as the Salvation Army and the British Red Cross. The 261,025 items processed by the LPO up to October included 20,309 mobile phones, 18,433 Oyster card holders and 11,580 wallets or purses. LPO spokesperson Sue Tyler said, “The fact that so many items have been handed in over 80 years is a testament to the honesty of the travelling public in London”.

24.12.14 EVENING STANDARD – *Post by Alistair McLaurin* – “It’s time to stop talking of a 24-hour Underground service to support a so-called “night-time economy” and start thinking about the reality of how a city runs. People who make London function need to get to their workplaces. That won’t happen reliably if the Underground does not have regular shutdowns for maintenance”.

26.12.14 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by Peter Morgan (see 28.11.14 & 19.12.14 above)* – “On 4 December 1982, my father and I, Watford football fans with an interest in trains, went to see Watford Chairman Elton John and Football Trust Chairman Lord Aberdare, open the Watford Stadium Halt. This was soon to be nicknamed the “Hooligan Halt”, its purpose being to deliver opposition supporters direct to the Vicarage Road Stadium, without the need to bus or march them across the town centre in the days when football hooliganism was rife. Elton John, like me, was brought up around Northwood Hills. No doubt he too caught the Metropolitan Line to Watford Met. station. Like me, he may have wondered why this station was built so far out of town, as he walked from the station to Vicarage Road. Doubtless we both would have thought a rail link nearer the ground would have been a great idea, in the same way “Hooligan Halt” was considered a good investment of £380K in 1982. However, I only recall this station being used a handful of times and, with hindsight, it was white elephant. Now as an adult, a Watford Met. station user, still a HCC taxpayer, I have read about the Croxley Rail Link for many years and questioned the need, let alone the cost of it. Now we are told it will cost £230M and that “HCC and LU are discussing who will be responsible for specific aspects of the project”. Our Councils claim poverty and austerity at every opportunity. It would seem, however, we can afford a Rail Link, described as “vital” by HCC, but to many, myself included, the benefits remain suspect, to say the least, and seem, from your reports, to involve the residents of Amersham (in Buckinghamshire), rather than the people of Hertfordshire. Has anyone asked the people living on the Metropolitan Line if they are likely to use the Rail Link more than they do the Met. station at present?”