

London

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■ ■ How to keep in touch with Railfuture action

London and South East branch launched a new Yahoo! newsgroup in February. The newsgroup is being used to send members in the L&SE area information on email about activities in their area, to help them keep up to date with the work of the branch committee and with their local divisions.

Many L&SE members have already received an email inviting them to join the group. By obtaining a free Yahoo! ID they can access minutes and receive reminders of their local meetings, vote on issues and other L&SE information. The newsgroup aims to be a no-cost "broadcast" mechanism to branch members.

Link: http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/Railfuture_LondonandSE/

■ ■ Crossrail and the Greenford branch

There is concern that the Crossrail-related plan to curtail Greenford branch trains at West Ealing could mean the kiss of death for the line. Many of the branch line users travel to and from Ealing Broadway and will be reluctant to change trains to travel one short stop – especially as in the Greenford-bound direction this will involve hiking up and down the West Ealing footbridge. Ideally, a better long-term solution might be conversion to tram or light rail with street running into Ealing.

■ ■ Chronic overcrowding on peak trains

The Barking-Gospel Oak Line User Group continues to press for measures to relieve chronic peak-time overcrowding, and for the new trains scheduled for December to be three cars, not two. The group is also campaigning for the line to be electrified, which would also enable its increasing volume of freight traffic to be electric-hauled.

■ ■ Timetables

London TravelWatch has been taking a close look at the confusing mishmash of Christmas/New Year rail timetables which were a mixture of weekday, Saturday and "special" services, often exacerbated by being poorly publicised. Chiltern Railways were particular offenders in the last festive season. More uniformity and better publicity would make life much easier for everybody.

■ ■ Ticket office

There was much rejoicing at Transport Minister Andrew Adonis' refusal to let South West Trains make swingeing cuts to station ticket-office hours, which would have adversely affected many London-area stations. London TravelWatch opposed these cuts vigorously, and also highlighted SWT's failure to make a satisfactory range of destinations available on their ticket machines.

■ ■ East London line cash

Continued uncertainty over funding for East London Line Extension phase two (to Clapham Junction) is causing particular concern to South London Line users. The Victoria-Peckham Rye-London Bridge service cannot continue in its present form for much longer, because of planned platform extensions at Battersea Park which will sever the junction there and Thameslink works at London Bridge.

It will be replaced by a half-hourly Victoria-Bellingham shuttle, bypassing Battersea Park, but the South London Line's direct link to the City will be lost unless ELL2 is approved. Any chances of improved frequencies also depend on that decision. Meanwhile the DfT has conceded that it is not legally acceptable to replace the withdrawn Birmingham-Brighton service via Kensington with a weekly bus between Ealing Broadway and Wandsworth Road, and that it should be replaced by a train service. Further details are awaited with interest.



Picture: VIRGIN TRAINS

The Roman road to Chester

Four Roman Centurions joined passengers on the 07.10 Euston to Chester train in February to launch Virgin's new hourly service.

Early morning travellers were surprised to find their tickets being checked by Centurio Ocratius Maximus Gittus and colleagues from the Chester garrison. Thir-

teen direct trains to and from London run Monday to Friday, with a typical journey time of 2 hours 5 minutes.

Virgin Trains is working with Visit Chester and Cheshire to promote the new service to Chester. The centurions were provided by Roman Tours Ltd, based in Chester.

Railwatch rewards for writers

Thanks to the publishers of the *Fire and Steam* DVD featured in Railwatch 118, the following *Railwatch* correspondents received free copies of the DVD:

Janice Uphill, Pinner, Middx, R A Smith, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex, John Savage, Lakeside, Tring, Herts, Graham Lund, Girvan, David Fursdon, Gretton, near Corby, Northants, and Martin Smith, Abingdon, Oxon.

Thanks to the BFI, the following contributors to *Railwatch* 117 received a free copy of the *Points and Aspects* DVD:

Tim Mickleburgh, Grimsby, Simon Norton, Cambridge, David Bailey, Dawlish, Devon, Andy Douglass, Tomlinscote, Frimley, Surrey, Roger W Blake, Stoke Newington, London, Anthony Kay, Loughborough, Leics.