

On the

NEWSLETTER FROM CAMBRIDGE HEATH AND LONDON FIELDS RAIL USER GROUP

DECEMBER 1999

Help on way for neglected stations

A help point and closed circuit TV cameras will be installed at both Cambridge Heath and London Fields stations in the next few months, WAGN managers have told representatives of the rail users group.

The help point – like those used on the Tube – will have a double function. It will allow passengers to find out what is going when trains are not running to the timetable and it will allow them to call for assistance in an emergency.

But recognising that people need more reassurance about their personal safety, WAGN is also planning to fit CCTV. At the moment, we do not have a definite date for that, but we hope it will be soon.

The company also recognises that the stations need better information on train running and they are getting quotes for the cost of fitting long-line public address equipment which would allow staff – probably at Hackney Downs – to make additional announcements for Cambridge Heath and London Fields.

This more pro-active attitude at WAGN emerged when Ray King, Graham Larkbey, Hackney Council's Roger Blake and Tower Hamlets Council's Tony Davis met Mike Stewart, Tom Joyner and Naomi Turnbull of WAGN at Liverpool Street station on 15 November.

Before CCTV is fitted, group station manager Tom Joyner will invite a user group representative for a "walk-round of the stations", so that their input can be obtained about the optimum siting of the cameras.

Tony Davis raised the point that, during times of disruption he had been unable to get through to Customer Relations, and was concerned that a similar problem would occur with the Help Points. Mike Stewart undertook to look at the staffing of the Help Points and also the

possibility of introducing a pre-recorded message system that would deal with the most common enquiries.

We pointed out that there are not enough poster boards at any of the stations, particularly at platform level but Mike and Tom pointed out that poster boards are frequently vandalised, and therefore expensive to maintain.

WAGN is considering providing more and better posters sites but may take up an offer from the users group to provide at least some of the information for them.

WAGN recognises that the stations are currently poorly maintained, and that there is an urgent need for them to be made more welcoming and safer for passengers.

We said lighter colour paint would make the stations appear more cheerful, and would also help to reflect light in the stairwells and underpass.

Mike Stewart undertook to provide timescales for the repainting of the stations and he also agreed to look into the cost and practicalities of providing floral baskets to improve the appearance of the stations.

Lighting is recognised as a serious issue at all stations. The lights have failed completely several times at Bethnal Green,

and there are frequently broken lights at the other stations.

Railtrack will be asked to respond to these problems more quickly.

A further problem is that, being unstaffed, it may take some time for faults to be noticed at the stations. Tom Joyner is hoping to arrange for regular visits to the stations from the supervisors at Hackney Downs. This is subject to the agreement of staff at Hackney Downs.

The graffiti was recognised as a problem at both stations.

Cleaning contracts are currently up for tender and it is WAGN's intention that the new contracts will include provision for offensive graffiti to be covered within two hours of reporting and all other graffiti to be covered within 24 hours. Mike Stewart will provide current figures on the annual cost of removing graffiti.

The possibility of enlisting local schools and colleges to paint murals was raised and will be explored.

The damp problem at Cambridge Heath, where the floor tiles become very slippery when it rains, was also recognised. We asked for handrails to be installed and handrails and stair risers to be painted yellow for the benefit of visually impaired passengers.

WAGN agreed to provide a mirror on the blind corner on the stairwell at Cambridge Heath.

We also asked WAGN to consider reopening the blocked-up entrance from Cambridge Heath station into Hackney Road.

We said there was increasing potential for the stations and asked for the service to be enhanced, particularly on weekday evenings after 8pm and at weekends.

The Empire theatre, the Sunday street markets and the plans for a new music centre, museum and library at Hackney, should generate considerable traffic for WAGN. Mike Stewart pointed out that he was not responsible for service provision, but would bring these points to the attention to the operating side.

We plan to seek another meeting to make the case for a better train service.

WAGN is also planning to instal a ticket machines, probably outside the stations to minimise the problems of vandalism and theft. This is particularly pressing with the introduction of ticket gates at Liverpool Street.

We pointed out the advertising potential for WAGN of the bridge at Cambridge Heath station. WAGN is considering a suggestion from Roger Blake that London Fields station should have the words "for Mare Street" added to indicate to passengers that this is the closest station to Hackney town centre.

We also asked WAGN to consider letting out office accommodation on the station.

TV eye

The reputation of Cambridge Heath as one of the worst stations in Britain has attracted the interest of two TV companies. Both Belgian TV and Channel 5 have filmed the station in all its "glory".

Cinderella can go to the ball

WAGN is to provide rail services to allow people attending Millennium celebrations in central London to get home to Hackney in the early hours of New Year's Day.

On Saturday 1 January 2000, trains will leave Liverpool Street at 23 and 53 minutes past the hour, commencing at 01.23 and ending at 03.53.

They will arrive at Cambridge Heath at 28 and 58, and at London Fields at 30 and 00 minutes past the hour.

There is no service into Liverpool Street at any point during the period from 01.00 to 04.00.