

London TravelWatch (the operating name of London Transport Users Committee)

**Report to the Secretary of State
under Section 43 (3) (c) of the Railways Act 1993, as amended by the Transport Act 2000**

Proposed closure of the North London Line (NLL) between Stratford and North Woolwich

1 The closure proposal

1.1 The closure proposal in question is:

Docklands Light Railway Limited (DLR) is planning to create a new DLR line from the new Channel Tunnel Rail Link station being built at Stratford International through Stratford and West Ham to connect at Canning Town with the existing DLR Beckton Line and the new London City Airport extension to King George V and Woolwich Arsenal. This will involve the conversion of the existing NLL between Stratford and Canning Town to DLR operation and closure of the section between Royal Victoria and North Woolwich.

It is proposed that the NLL between Stratford and North Woolwich may close on or after 1 November 2006.

1.2 The proposal is promoted by DLR and made under the provisions of the Railways Act 1993, as amended by the Transport Act 2000. The proposal was advertised, by the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA), twice in two national newspapers: The Times and The Daily Telegraph and a local paper: The Evening Standard on 28 October and 4 November 2005.

1.3 Statutory notices were posted at all NLL and at Barking – Gospel Oak line stations.

2 Procedural background

2.1 The Railways Act 1993, as amended by the Transport Act 2000 establishes a procedure to be followed for closure proposals relating to the national rail network.

2.2 In respect of the proposals in question, London TravelWatch is required (under section 43 (3) of the Railways Act 1993 as amended by the Transport Act 2000) to:

a) consider whether or not the proposed closure will cause any hardship;

b) identify any reasonable means of alleviating any such hardship; and

c) prepare, and send to the Secretary of State, a report of the conclusions which it has reached in the discharge of its functions under paragraphs (a) and (b) above.

2.3 For the purpose of (b) above, the Committee is required not to conclude that any particular means of alleviating hardship is reasonable unless, balancing the cost to the Department for Transport (DfT) (or any other public authority) of employing those means against the benefit of any alleviation thereby secured, the Committee is of the opinion, on the basis of the information supplied to it, that the expenditure involved represents good value for money.

3 Receipt of representations

- 3.1 Under the statutory closure procedure, objections to the closure proposals are to be sent to the Secretary of State, who must consider them. However, the Secretary of State must also send copies of the objections to the Committee. Because the Committee has a general duty to consider all the information it receives, it ought to consider the objections too.
- 3.2 A period of six weeks was allowed for objections. The Committee took into account all representations received, whether or not they were 'duly made' within the stated time limits.
- 3.3 Representations received up to 16 December 2005 were summarised, and the summary sent to DLR. This summary and DLR's responses were included in a report to members.
- 3.4 The Secretariat has made no administrative distinction between 'duly made' objections and those which arrived after the deadline apart from being short of time to get a written response from DLR.
- 3.5 29 representations were made of which two were comments and the remainder objections. Objections that arrived after the sub-committee reports were written were considered at a sub-committee meeting as detailed below.
- 3.6 All those making representations were invited to attend the sub-committee's hearing.
- 3.7 The Committee is not bound to take *only* the objections into account when reaching its conclusions; indeed the Committee is under a general duty to take into account all the relevant information it receives. The Committee also considered issues that it has spotted for itself but have not been mentioned in the representations.

4 The Committee's consideration of the proposals

- 4.1 As allowed for in statute, and in accordance with the Committee's Rules of Procedure, a special sub-committee was appointed to deal with the NLL closure proposal on behalf of the Committee.
- 4.2 Two weeks before the Sub-Committee met at a public hearing, its members along with two members of the Secretariat and two representatives from DLR undertook a site visit to the stations between Stratford and North Woolwich. Members considered the interchange concerns at Stratford and West Ham stations, as well as undertaking the walking route between North Woolwich and King George V stations.
- 4.3 The Sub-Committee met at 1000 on 2 February 2006 in the hospitality rooms at Hackney Empire, Mare Street, London E8 1EJ.
- 4.4 Members of the Sub-Committee were supplied with copies of all the representations received.
- 4.5 The Secretariat produced an agenda including notes on how the Sub-Committee would conduct the meeting.
- 4.6 The Secretariat produced two documents. The first detailing the background and the Sub-Committee's duties, the second reporting the issues raised by objectors and London TravelWatch.

- 4.7 The Minutes of the meeting are attached as Annex 1. This report should be read in conjunction with the minutes and with the documents considered by members at the meeting, also attached. The Committee has also forwarded to the Secretary of State correspondence that the Sub-Committee received directly from objectors.
- 4.8 An audio recording of the meeting was made.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 The Committee's conclusions, and the reasoning behind them, are as follows. The conclusions are set out in bold type.

Structural issues

- 5.2 An objector questioned the speed of DLR trains, as despite their top speed being 50mph, most of their station stops are shorter distances apart than stops on the NLL. Therefore journeys would be slower. DLR considered close station stops as a benefit to passengers. They cited the DLR journey between Canning Town and King George V as taking 9 minutes, compared with the NLL journey between Canning Town and North Woolwich, also taking 9 minutes. Based on this comparison, DLR does not believe theirs is a slow service. Members accepted DLR's response.
- 5.3 **Members accepted that whilst there would be some *hardship* caused with the closure of Silvertown and North Woolwich stations, the new DLR stations at London City Airport and King George V respectively were within acceptable walking distance of the NLL stations and surrounding catchment areas.**
- 5.4 **The Committee notes that whilst people travelling to North Woolwich via the ferry or the foot tunnel from Woolwich would have approximately 356m extra to walk, of those residents in the immediate area which would use North Woolwich or King George V stations, a greater number are nearer King George V than North Woolwich. Whilst some people would undoubtedly be dis-benefited, and would therefore suffer very limited *hardship*, it is the Committee's view that more people would benefit.**
- 5.5 **The Committee recommends that the walking routes between the Woolwich ferry / foot tunnel / North Woolwich station and King George V station have clear signage and good lighting, especially during the period before the opening of the Woolwich Arsenal extension of DLR. After the extension opens the Committee expects fewer people will arrive at King George V station by either the ferry or the foot tunnel.**
- 5.6 An objector referred to Document C, paragraph 3.1.3 concerning a turnaround point on the NLL at Canning Town or Custom House, stating that DLR's response that this was not possible was incorrect. DLR stated that they believe it is not currently normal practice to turn NLL trains at Custom House and do not think it is operationally an optimal thing to do in terms of providing a good service for passengers requiring Silvertown and North Woolwich. Members accepted DLR's response.
- 5.7 **The Committee recommends that consideration be given to the complete renumbering of the platforms at Stratford in order to create a more logical and less confusing system for passengers. The Committee accepted that this would cause short-term confusion for long-standing passengers but believed that the longer term benefits of such a change were significantly greater.**

Potential future uses and alternative suggestions for the route

- 5.8 In response to an objector's suggestion that the Committee should consider alternative schemes, DLR stated that was a matter for the Transport and Works Act (TWA) enquiry. Members accepted DLR's response.

Transport connections and journey times

- 5.9 In Document C, paragraph 3.3.1, the Secretariat questioned the accuracy of DLR's stated journey time between Rainham and Hackney Central at present (47 minutes) with an interchange from c2c at West Ham onto the NLL. The future journey times were also stated as 47 minutes. The Secretariat believed the current journey time estimate to be somewhat excessive and asked DLR how the journey times were calculated.
- 5.10 DLR responded, stating that the journey times were calculated using the TfL Journey Planner programme. Existing journey time information was taken directly from Journey Planner based on a typical morning peak journey. There was an error in the table and the existing journey time should have read 43 minutes. For interim and permanent arrangements, Journey Planner was used to calculate a typical journey time for each separate part of the journey (i.e. a time from Rainham to West Ham, West Ham to Stratford and Stratford to Hackney Central). Average wait time have been calculated as half the service frequency based on existing operating patterns. Walk time between modes is included in the average wait time. Wait time and service frequencies for the proposed DLR service were taken from the DLR service plan.
- 5.11 **Whilst the Committee accepts that some *hardship* will be caused by the loss of through journeys and that there would be some longer journey times as a result of the proposal, members believed that this would be compensated to some extent by the higher frequency of the DLR service and the new journey opportunities for orbital links created by the Woolwich extension.**

Accessibility issues

- 5.12 As DLR only allows folded bicycles in cases on their service, they accept that some cyclists who currently use the NLL between Stratford and North Woolwich would be disadvantaged. A recent survey by DLR on the NLL found that 0.2% of users had bicycles with them. DLR stated there is a cycle lane under the London City Airport extension and passengers can also take bicycles on the Jubilee Line.
- 5.13 **The Committee accepts that the non-acceptance of non-folded bicycles on DLR would cause *hardship* for some passengers and recommend that bicycles be allowed on the DLR between King George V and Stratford (where none of the line is in tunnel) during off peak times. The Committee also recommend that secure cycle storage should be provided at all main DLR stations.**
- 5.14 **The Committee concluded there would be some *hardship* for passengers who currently have a through journey across Stratford who would in future have to interchange at Stratford. The Committee believes that there is a requirement for the provision of lifts at Stratford that will be of a sufficient size for the numbers of passengers using the station, with a suitable allowance for expected growth in demand. The Committee also request that the lifts at Stratford have a maintenance contract in place with times for repair which is at DLR maintenance standards or better.**
- 5.15 DLR state that the size of the lifts on the London City Airport extension will be their minimum for future lift size. This is the size they have designed for the NLL platforms. The new NLL platforms will have two lifts; one from the central subway and one from the western subway. There would be no room for escalators here. The steps at the other

end of the western subway (up to the Jubilee Line ticket hall) will have a chair lift for access. **Members request that a chair lift be provided from the central subway as well, in the event of the lifts being out of use, with a robust and firm maintenance contract provided.**

- 5.16 **The Committee requests that DLR be required to discuss further with it the lift provision at Stratford when detailed plans are drawn up.**
- 5.17 **Members recommended that lift and escalator access be considered for the proposed new northern ticket hall at Stratford so that there will be quick and smooth access as well as step-free access to the NLL platforms.**

Disruption during works

- 5.18 **Members stressed the vital importance of good signage and information on temporary access during any transition phase, if the proposal goes ahead, when the new operation is up and running. Given the complexity of the Stratford station layout, excellent way-finding signage will be imperative. Announcements on the Woolwich ferry with directions to King George V station (at least until the Woolwich Arsenal DLR extension opens) are also important.**

Concerns regarding the statement of reasons and other supporting documents for the closure

- 5.19 **In Document C, paragraph 3.6.1, the Secretariat disagreed with DLR's average waiting times for the NLL. DLR state that average wait time for existing NLL services is 15 minutes, based on half the scheduled frequency of 2 trains per hour. In their comparison of a journey from West Ham to Hackney Central, the future DLR journey comes out as slightly quicker than the current journey, due to the 15 minutes wait time allocated for the NLL. The Secretariat state that the majority of passengers currently arrive at a station for a particular service, therefore the average wait time for the present NLL service is likely to be only a few minutes. DLR confirms that for a journey from West Ham to Hackney Central, excluding wait time, the existing journey is 12 minutes with the future DLR journey taking 16 minutes (including interchange time at Stratford).**

Ticketing

- 5.20 **As the booking offices at Silvertown and North Woolwich will be lost, the Committee recommends that DLR open a ticket office at London City Airport (where passive provision already exists).**
- 5.21 **The Committee recommends that the ticket offices at Canning Town and London City Airport should be required to offer a full range of tickets to locations across the National Rail network to match the existing range of tickets available at Silvertown and North Woolwich. The Committee also requests that the ticket office at West Ham should sell the full range of National Rail tickets (rather than the limited number of destinations sold at present).**
- 5.22 **Between the proposed closure in November 2006 and the autumn of 2007, from which date TfL have since been confirmed as taking over the Silverlink Metro franchise, there will be a gap during which Oyster 'pay as you go' will not be available on the NLL. The Committee concluded that passengers who travel between west of Stratford and stations between Stratford and North Woolwich who currently hold rail-only tickets will suffer *hardship* during this time. Therefore, the Committee seeks assurances that DLR and LUL would accept National Rail tickets on their services at stations between Stratford and King George V until Oyster 'pay as you go' is introduced.**

- 5.23 **The Committee considered representations about acceptance of the c2c Capital Club weekend Ranger ticket, between West Ham and Stratford and agreed that arrangements should be made to continue to accept this product.**

Demand

- 5.24 With regard to Document C, paragraph 3.8.1, an objector disagrees with DLR's forecast figure of 2,400 passengers who would be affected by the need for an additional change at Stratford, suggesting that the figure is likely to more than double that. DLR's response was that demand forecasts (within TfL) take into account future growth as well as the Olympic legacy, and that they have no interest in using a forecast which is too low. The Committee accepted this statement.

Publicity

- 5.25 A number of objectors raised the issue of publicity of the proposal and hearing being inadequate. DLR stated that they have fully complied with the rules on consultation and that they funded Silverlink to put new poster sites at every NLL station and on the Barking – Gospel Oak line. DLR also sent out 60,000 leaflets to residents along the route as well as holding public meetings and exhibitions. The Committee is satisfied that the advertising of the hearing has been undertaken in accordance with the statutory requirements, and that DLR have done over and above what they were legally required to do.

Other issues

- 5.26 **The Committee requests that appropriate information systems be put in place at Stratford Low Level station to ensure that passengers are told which platform a westbound train will depart from, particularly the first departing train.**
- 5.27 With regard to Document C, paragraph 3.12.2 (i), an objector asked what analysis has been undertaken to establish that NLL metro services operating every 8, 10 or 15 minutes could not deliver a similar standard and quality of service to that proposed to the DLR if the infrastructure were upgraded to a comparable standard, and certain additional stations were provided. DLR state they have considered a number of alternative options for improving the NLL, including retaining and upgrading the existing service. These alternatives were considered jointly with the SRA and discounted for the following key reasons:
- Potential conflict with the proposed Crossrail scheme;
 - They would not deliver the same level of benefit as the DLR scheme,
 - They could not be delivered in the same timescale and for the same level of budget as the DLR scheme; and
 - Other alternatives would not provide the capacity and level of service required for the 2012 Olympics.

The consideration of these alternatives is a matter for the TWA enquiry. The Committee accepted DLR's response.

- 5.28 **To conclude, the Committee decided that if this proposal went ahead, there would be some *hardship* but not sufficient to reject the whole scheme. The Committee recommended some ameliorating measures, which were all considered value for money and a reasonable cost in the scale of the proposals put forward.**
- 5.29 **In the event of the TWA order application resulting in a significantly different outcome to the current proposal, the Committee would wish to have further opportunity to consider the closure application as there might be a different set of circumstances to take into account.**