

# THE UP LINE

NEWSLETTER OF CAMBRIDGE HEATH AND LONDON FIELDS RAIL USERS

JULY 2011

## Peak trains to be axed

Six trains are to be axed from the morning peak at Cambridge Heath and five in the evening when a new timetable is introduced in December.

We and the two local councils have protested to the train operator for months about these planned changes but to no effect.

Ironically the timetable was "thrown up in the air" by National Express East Anglia because the Government cleared the way for the train operator to obtain 30 new trains, mainly for Stansted Express.

It would have been better for us if NXEA had introduced the new trains without timetable changes. Instead they recast the timetable to give long-distance passengers a better deal at the expense of inner-London stations.

At Cambridge Heath, more than 200 passengers a day will be affected, largely by the loss of their Cheshunt trains. This will force them to switch to other trains.

Our protests did have some effect at London Fields where only one train has been cut in the morning peak. We are annoyed that NXEA has put the clock back by six years with some of these changes. Full details of the changes are on the NXEA website.

To add insult to injury, NXEA has failed to improve the poor Sunday services at our stations. It is a nasty farewell "gift" from NXEA, which from

5 February 2012 has been banned by the Government from running trains on our local lines. Our trains will then be operated by a different company. The Government has not given a reason but NXEA was 23rd out of 24 train operators in the National Passenger Survey rankings last year and are still at the bottom in the June 2011 figures. More information on the Passenger Focus website.

The Government has said there are now three shortlisted bidders to take over the franchise:

**ABELLIO GREATER ANGLIA**, owned by Dutch Railways, which already runs (with Serco) Merseyrail and Northern Rail, as well as some bus services in London.

**EASTERN RAILWAY**, owned by Go Ahead Group, which runs bus services in London and is involved in the Southern, Southeastern and London Midland rail franchises.

**STAGECOACH ANGLIA TRAINS**, owned by Stagecoach, which already runs South West Trains, East Midlands Trains, owns 49% of Virgin Trains and also runs many of our local buses.

The Government is expected to announce its decision in November after receiving bids from the three groups in July. We have co-operated with the passenger lobby group Railfuture in making approaches to the three groups, asking for improvements to the train service and our stations.

We want the standards to match those of the London Overground.

### Healthy growth

The train cuts are particularly galling because morning peak usage at Cambridge Heath went up by 11% over the year to May. Overall numbers at both stations grew by an average of 4.8% over the year. This ought to give the operator the incentive to improve services, not cut them.

### Screen boost

At London Fields, new train information screens at street level are part of a package of improvements, funded through Hackney Council. The work included making a second entrance from the park side of the railway, extra platform seating, more signs, pigeon proofing and reglazing the front windows. More improvements will follow on cycle parking, the CCTV system and activation of a third Oyster machine.

### Station eye

We can also thank British Transport Police for taking a more active interest in both stations. They have been proactive at Cambridge Heath in trying to find ways to limit the nuisance caused by the anti-social behaviour of a small number of people.

## Making progress with the CHLFUG campaign

### Improvements since the CHLFUG campaign began:

Off-peak, evening, Saturday and Sunday trains. Oyster card readers, better ticket machines with Oyster top-up facilities. Real-time information screens at street level, London Fields. Help points. Passenger information system. Live monitoring of CCTV at London Fields. Telephone in London Fields foyer. Platform seats. More timetables and printed information. Re-painting. Improved lighting. Efficient graffiti removal. New signs. Cambridge Heath needle bin removed. Stair edge repairs. Litter collection. Additional entrance at London Fields.

### Our aspirations for now and the future:

Periodic heavy clean of the stations. Reliable ticket machines and Oyster readers. A regular service every 10 to 15 minutes, every day of the week, including Sundays. Real-time train information screens at street level at Cambridge Heath. Live monitoring of CCTV at Cambridge Heath. Ticket machines providing a full range of tickets, including PlusBus. Additional station entrance at Cambridge Heath to improve access and safety. Ramps on stairs for cycles. Passenger lifts. Public address system.