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## **Document J**

### **Minutes of the closure panel meeting**

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**Minutes of the closure panel meeting that met at Watford Colosseum,  
Rickmanswoth Road, Watford on 14 June 2012 at 10am**

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#### **Present**

#### **Panel**

David Barry Gail Engert, David Leibling (Chair)

### **London TravelWatch Officers**

Vincent Stops                      Policy Officer  
Keletha Barrett                    Assistant Policy Officer  
Kathiravan Uthayanan            Project Officer

### **Promoter of closure - London Underground Limited**

Keith Foley  
Steve Hunter

### **Objectors**

Richard Harrington, MP  
Councillor Peter Jeffree  
Councillor George Derbyshire  
Carol Hockley  
Isobel Doherty  
Paul Embleton  
Helen Rice  
Lester Wagman  
Sylvia Ashford  
Michael Dutton  
John Jackson  
Robert Caton  
John Malcolm  
Councillor Malcolm Meerabux  
Raffi Katz

### **Observers**

Roxanne Glaud            Hertfordshire County Council  
Rhiannon Hill            London Mayor's Office  
David Leboff and others representing London Underground Limited

There were approximately 80 members of the public in the audience.

### **1 Chair's introduction and pre-meeting announcements**

The Chair welcomed members, officers and guests to the meeting and made the standard housekeeping and safety announcements.

The Chair explained that the meeting was held during the day in order that enough time could be devoted to hearing all of the issues and allowing as much time as possible for objectors to make their points.

### **2 Apologies for absence**

There were none

### **3 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair stated that he lived in Pinner and was a Metropolitan line user.

### **4 Presentation by Keith Foley of London Underground**

A series of slides were presented. The pertinent points were:

- Watford station is about 2 kilometres from the town centre.
- There are around 2500 passenger entries and exits per day. Watford station is the 25<sup>th</sup> least used station across the London Underground Limited (LUL) network.
- The station has seen a decline in patronage between 2007 and 2012 of 3% whereas other Metropolitan line stations have seen a growth of 4%.
- Closure is only being considered because of the proposal to build the Croxley Rail Link project.
- Hertfordshire County Council and LUL are co-promoters of the Croxley Rail Link project.
- The route of the Link was described including the two new stations at Ascot Road and Vicarage Road.
- The project has been the subject of much scrutiny. The benefits compared to costs are positive.
- The project is consistent with all material policies. Watford station would only close if the Link project goes ahead.
- The new stations will benefit areas in need of regeneration and Watford hospital. Both proposed new stations will be accessible.

## **5 Presentation by Steve Hunter for London Underground**

A series of slides were presented. The pertinent points were:

- A survey of 1000 Watford station passengers was undertaken in 2010. This is a 27% sample of passengers using the station.
- 70% of journeys from the station were Watford residents.
- Most passengers were travelling to central London.
- The survey was able to determine origins and destinations of passengers.
- Just over 50% of passengers lived closer to the proposed new stations on the Croxley Rail Link than Watford station.
- The other 30% of journeys from the station start elsewhere on the Metropolitan line.
- Steve Hunter described the broad origins of passengers.
- Mr Hunter described the calculation of average journey time saving and the conclusion that on average existing users were one minute better off.
- A similar calculation for passengers to Watford destination gives an average time saving of four minutes for existing users.
- The Croxley link will substantially increase the number of people living within the catchment area of the Metropolitan line.
- There will be an increase in passengers because the Link provides a useful service to and from Watford Junction station to this area of Watford.
- The strong case for the scheme is due to benefits for existing users, new passengers and regeneration benefits.
- The project Transport Assessment finds a reduction of 300 vehicle trips, some small increases in traffic on some roads and some reduction in traffic on other roads. This will lead to a benefit in terms of pollution.

## **6 Further presentation by Keith Foley for London Underground**

A series of slides were presented. The pertinent points were:

- London TravelWatch asked LUL to address access to the stations by cycle and walking and also local bus services
- There are definitely plans to improve pedestrian and cycling access to key destinations from the new stations
- Hertfordshire County Council has a Quality [bus] Network Partnership to look at bus services. Bus service W30 is contracted to the end of 2012/13. There are no plans to change the service of the W30
- 200 parking spaces are to be provided at Ascot Road station. There are no plans to change car parking prices from what they would be at Watford station
- The two new stations, Ascot Road and Vicarage Road would be in the same fare zone as Watford station
- The fares from Watford High Street and Watford Junction stations would be set as they are now. In fare zone 8 for the former, a special fare zone for the latter.
- The project promoters have demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Department for Transport that the project gives a good return on the investment. The benefit to cost ratio is 2.6:1. The Government only generally considers funding projects with a ratio of 1.5:1
- Retaining Watford station would result in a benefit to cost ratio of 1.4:1 and puts funding for the Croxley Rail Link in jeopardy as it would then be difficult to justify the investment.
- The key reason for this would be the need to operate less frequent services which would be less attractive and lead to reduced regeneration and social benefits.
- The split service alternative would mean buying more trains. Trains are a very large part of the project cost. The services operated would be less frequent and therefore less attractive.
- A shuttle service between Watford and Croxley stations would need additional trains and the construction of a new bay platform at Croxley station. At two trains an hour this would not be an attractive service
- If LUL were to use old trains for this service there would be additional costs as this would mean facilities for maintaining two types of train. LUL would also need to train drivers for two train types.
- A shuttle service would increase costs significantly
- Alternative proposals to run services from Watford/Watford Junction stations to Rickmansworth/Chesham stations would only serve around 500 passengers, but cost additional trains. The expenditure could not be justified.
- Keith Foley summed up the LUL case. Watford station would only close along with the opening of the Croxley Rail Link. The Link is an appropriate response to the hardship caused by the proposed closure. There are journey time improvements for existing passengers as a whole and new passengers would be attracted.

## **7 Initial member's questions of LUL**

- LUL were asked about the operation of a shuttle service. LUL accepted that it would be possible to construct a bay platform at Croxley station and to operate a shuttle

between it and Watford station, however the cost of the construction and the cost of rolling stock is not funded.

- LUL were asked about the problems caused to the Metropolitan line service in the event of some failure between Watford Junction and Watford High Street stations. They responded that this situation was not dissimilar to other of their operations. LUL argued that having an additional service into Watford Junction station would, in fact, mean more reliability, as their service duplicated London Overground's.
- LUL confirmed the intention was to run 6 trains an hour in the peak and 4 trains off peak to Watford Junction station.
- Members discussed the discrepancy in their observation of the number of Watford Boys Grammar School pupils compared with the survey. The matter was unresolved.
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## **8 Statement from Richard Harrington MP**

The pertinent points were:

- He is in favour of the Croxley Rail Link
- His surveying suggests to him that there are more passengers affected than the LUL survey suggests that would suffer hardship.
- There are a lot of Watford Boys Grammar school pupils affected as well as pupils at other schools.
- There are lots of passengers who use the station to access Cassiobury Park and other facilities.
- Because the facility exists Mr Harrington believes that the additional costs to keep at least a peak time service operational would be small.

## **9 Statement from Councillor George Derbyshire, Park Ward**

The pertinent points were:

- Cllr Derbyshire stated that he is not opposed to the Croxley Rail Link project, but that it should not be at the expense of Watford station services.
- The turnout for the meeting [80 people] demonstrated the impact closure would have.
- He suggested that 1.4 million passengers was not, as the promoters of the Link project said, a small number. He did not accept that half of these would use a new station at Ascot Road. Even then 700,000 journeys would be a lot.
- The station's infrastructure will be maintained for the stabling of trains.
- Cllr Derbyshire was critical of the promoters who would be favouring Watford's poorer areas with improved access, but take away from well-off areas. He believed there is a bias against the retention of Watford station.
- Cllr Derbyshire felt it irrelevant that the station was ranked low down in terms of patronage of LUL stations. He asked whether stations with even lower patronage would be closed.
- It was suggested the survey data was out of date. For example it had not included the recently opened West Herts College. Students of which would have the hardship of having to walk further than at present.
- There would be hardship for patrons of the Colosseum venue who now use Watford station.

- It was suggested that if Watford station closed LUL would not be able to run the 10 trains per hour they were planning for in the future.

#### **10 Statement from Councillor Peter Jeffree, Park Ward**

The pertinent points were:

- Cllr Jeffree wanted to talk about the mitigation of hardship provided by the alternatives to closure that had been suggested.
- Cllr Jeffree made again the point about a proposed 10 train per hour service planned for the future not being possible under the Croxley Rail Link project. He believed that a retained Watford station would provide that capability.
- Cllr Jeffree could not understand why LUL thought providing a higher frequency service at Watford would mean a poorer service further down the line.
- He felt that the benefit to cost ratio of 1.4:1 compared favourably with the Government's benchmark requirement of 1.5:1.
- It was suggested that a bay platform at Croxley station was not necessary in order to allow for a shuttle service. Reversing could happen beyond the station on the section of track known as the North Curve. These shuttle trains could be accommodated in the timetable.
- This proposal would cost a little extra, but that would only reduce the benefit to cost ratio a little.
- Finally Cllr Jeffree promoted his preferred mitigation. A service from Watford station to Amersham/Chesham stations. Cllr Jeffree felt this on its own, or in combination with a service from Watford Junction station to Amersham /Chesham stations would mean Watford station staying open and provide a useful east/ west service.
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#### **11 Statement from Carol Hockley**

The pertinent points were:

- Ms Hockley represented residents of the Cassio Metro estate, particularly younger commuters.
- Ms Hockley described the benefits of the Watford station service to local residents, and also pointed out that the quoted maximum additional walk time would be extended for some people depending on their circumstances. For example those with children, or the elderly would take longer.
- Ms Hockley felt the closure would detract from efforts to reduce the use of cars.

#### **12 Statement from Isobel Doherty**

The pertinent points were:

- Ms Doherty was concerned that there will be financial and other losses to those owning properties that benefit from the location of the present station and for those with properties adjacent to the proposed new rail link alignment.

#### **13 Statement from Paul Embleton**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Embleton was concerned regarding road safety, particularly for children and students who in the future will have to cross a main road.
- Mr Embleton thought there would be the demand for the orbital routes discussed earlier.

#### **14 Statement from Helen Rice (Cassio Metro resident)**

The pertinent points were:

- Ms Rice reminded the panel that there were additional objectors that had been unable to attend due to various other commitments.
- Ms Rice questioned the relevance of LUL stating that Watford station was the 25<sup>th</sup> least used. She was also sceptical about the survey as she was a regular user and had not been approached for the survey.
- Ms Rice said that the additional walk time from the station would be problematical in itself, but would also be unsafe. She stated that local taxis were expensive.
- Ms Rice noted that the Mayor of London would be making the decision on closure, but that the Mayor was unaccountable to Watford residents.
- Ms Rice noted that the Croxley Green Branch railway had been closed due to lack of use, though it did not then link to the Metropolitan line.

#### **15 Statement from Lester Wagman**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Wagman has been running a campaign to save Watford station, he is a resident of the Cassiobury triangle area. He has three children and is a regular user of both the Metropolitan line and the London Overground.
- Mr Wagman emphasised that the additional journey times were additional and so would mean that some would have walking trips of 25 minutes or more.
- He wanted to stress the number of passengers that would lose out which he believes extends to the area north of the park, the Cassiobury triangle and an area on the south side of Rickmansworth Road and to the North of Whippendale Road.
- He believes there are 500 Watford Boys Grammar School pupils using the service daily. He stresses that young people are not always attentive to the road safety and that the alternative for the Grammar School pupils would be a 1.2km walk along a busy road with narrow pavements.
- Mr Wagman is very concerned regarding the road safety implications of the longer journeys for young people.
- He questioned the validity of the surveys that he believed were undertaken on 13 and 14 July when some pupils would not be at school.
- Mr Wagman proposed a bus service, as an alternative to the Croxley Rail Link that he thought would be popular if it was a ten minute service. The service would connect Watford Junction station with the town centre, Watford High Street [station], Watford Hospital and the Town Hall.
- As an alternative to the Watford station to Croxley station shuttle, Mr Wagman suggested a Watford station to Moor Park station should be considered.
- Mr Wagman pointed out that he believed many passengers use the London Overground to access Watford Junction station in order to catch a fast train into

London. He thought that would increase. He asked if London Midland had been consulted regarding this possible increase in passengers.

- Finally Mr Wagman reminded the panel that his petition now had 1159 signatures and that a copy was available with actual names and addresses as opposed to the one on the website which had many anonymous names or no address.

## **16 Statement from Michael Dutton**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Dutton stated that in December there had been a reduction in frequency to Watford station and the fast Moor Park service ceased.
- Mr Dutton noted that a Watford station to Rickmansworth station service had operated one weekend during engineering works. He had found that useful.
- Mr Dutton believes it would be beneficial to businesses to open the old station, Watford West station, on the Croxley Rail Link.

## **17 Statement from John Jackson representing the South and West Transport Action Group (SAWTAG)**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Jackson reminded the Panel of the importance of the Metropolitan line to football fans visiting the Watford ground.

## **18 Statement from Robert Caton who many years previously had been a member of a London TravelWatch predecessor Committee**

The pertinent points were:

- Robert Caton emphasised that there were commuters from the north of Cassiobury Park that would suffer hardship.
- His preference of an alternative was a shuttle service between Watford and Rickmansworth.

## **19 Statement from John Malcolm**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Malcolm asked what Discount Rate [an accounting technique to value future benefits and costs at today's value] was used for the business case and also if the case had been checked by an independent person.

These questions were answered directly by TfL: The Discount Rate was 3.5% and the business case had been assessed by the Department for Transport.

The session broke for a short comfort break



## **20 Statement from Mr Raffi Katz**

The pertinent points were:

- Mr Katz would in future have to walk for 25 minutes, his wife 35, to get to Ascot Road.

## **21 Statement from Councillor Malcolm Meerbux**

The pertinent points were:

- Councillor Meerbux felt that there were many indirect impacts of closing Watford station. For example, not only is there the fact of longer journeys for children, but also the worry this creates for parents and the pressure it creates on family life.
- The effect of the scheme will not just be to address congestion, but it will also lead to further development in a densely populated town.
- The station is beneficial in terms of access to work, education and employment; greater equality; and value for money. The station could continue to operate.
- Councillor Meerbux asked about the issue of driverless trains implying that this could contribute to a more efficient railway. He also felt that opening two stations and closing one was a mistake – Watford needed more public transport rather than less.
- Councillor Meerbux noted the reduction in service to Watford station [the December timetable change] and wondered whether this had been part of an unstated agenda leading to closure.

## **22 Consideration of the closure by members**

The Chair started the Panel's consideration asking about the fare for a trip to Watford Junction station and then onto central London from one of the new stations in zone 7.

LUL were unable to answer this point, but would respond to the Panel later.

There then followed discussion of the different destinations and motivations of passengers who, in fact, choose to use Watford station, but might be expected to use the faster service from Watford Junction station. This is dependent on the central London destination, interchange available at the destination station etc. It was stated by LUL that similarly some passengers will choose to use the Metropolitan line to access Watford Junction station. This would be facilitated by the Croxley Rail Link project.

The Chair asked for further clarification regarding the possible alternative services.

LUL explained that a two-train-per-hour service using the Northern Curve to Amersham/Chesham stations would be possible. But, it would either abstract trains from the planned service and utilise them less beneficially (as the use would be relatively low and the cost high) or it would add cost to the project.

LUL implied that a similar argument applied to the proposed shuttle alternative.

LUL accepted that they could operate an off-peak service interweaving trains from different terminus stations. However, during the peak, interweaving would be more difficult. Train service levels are run to meet the demand of the various branches. Every service run from Watford station would be taken from serving the other branches as planned. The present planned service is optimal for the amount of passengers at present and for the expected growth in passenger numbers

The Chair asked about the reduction in train services in the previous December timetable. LUL responded in terms of the improvement in performance of the service as measured by Excess Journey Time implying a more reliable service, though with less trains, was beneficial to passengers.

Gail Engert asked about the walking routes to the new stations which members of the Panel had used and found to be of poor quality. Ms Engert was concerned that the plans for upgrading the pedestrian routes were vague.

Roxanne Glaud, of Hertfordshire County Council, confirmed that they were presently looking at the various walking routes as part of a Southwest Herts Transportation Plan.

Ms Glaud responded to London TravelWatch's Policy Officer's prompt asking whether it was accepted that there is presently a poor walking environment and whether they anticipated implementing schemes. She stated that meetings were planned.

The Chair asked if Hertfordshire CC could write to the Panel outlining any proposals which might mitigate hardship for passengers displaced from Watford station. Ms Glaud agreed to do this.

Ms Engert asked about access to the Hospital station, she had observed the road was steep and the pavement condition poor. Ms Glaud responded that this too was the subject of a study.

David Barry asked two questions. Firstly how LUL worked with the school [Watford Boys Grammar School] generally on matters around its transport plan, but specifically on the number of pupils using the train service to Watford station. Secondly, Mr Barry asked about a further alternative suggested by an objector – a shuttle to Moor Park station.

LUL replied that a shuttle to Moor Park station would cost even more in terms of additional rolling stock than the Croxley station shuttle, but it would also interfere with the mainline service to central London and would probably mean fewer services into central London.

A member of the audience made the point that the service from Rickmansworth interferes, in the same way, with the central London service. LUL that this was not so problematical as there are reversing sidings at Rickmansworth, but also the main issue is the additional cost of trains to run shuttles that could be utilised better elsewhere.

The Chair interjected that it may also be quicker to travel to Moor Park as they did presently, if the shuttle is only half hourly, to join an existing, direct service.

The Chair then proposed to work through section 5 of Document C which detailed the responses to the proposal from consultees.

### **Alternative proposals**

Members accepted the business case argument for not running a shuttle service from Watford station.

They also accepted that there would be timetabling difficulties in running an alternate service to Watford and Watford junction stations. However, LUL's main point was that if you had a low frequency service on both branches there would not be the business case benefits that a single high frequency service would deliver.

LUL were asked about the possibility of utilising non-passenger journeys into and out of Watford station stabling facility as passenger carrying services. This was dismissed by LUL on the grounds that these movements were either very early or very late, but also not scheduled as a timetabled movement.

### **Additional walk/cycle time to new stations**

Members discussed briefly about the additional walk time and the earlier discussions regarding mitigation being provided by an improvement in the pedestrian environment. The Secretariat was asked to seek information from the Watford Boys Grammar School regarding the level of usage by pupils.

### **Additional car journeys**

Members noted that modelling suggested that car journeys would decrease generally in the area. The 200 space car park was not expected, by LUL, to generate any additional journeys over the ones that already used the Watford station car park and those that parked elsewhere [including the surrounding streets] to park.

It was confirmed that car parking price at Ascot Road station would be maintained at the level that would otherwise apply at Watford station.

### **Increased pollution levels**

Members noted that pollution levels go in tandem with the number of car journeys.

### **Car parking**

This was discussed above.

### **Additional travel costs**

Members had been reassured that fares from the proposed Ascot Road and Vicarage Road stations would remain in the same zone (7) as Watford station was presently.

Members noted that there would be a group of passengers for which it was a shorter walk to Watford Junction station than to proposed new stations and that this would mean an additional cost.

TfL suggested that this was a choice made presently and would remain so.

The Policy Officer suggested he researched the issue of compensation for the small number of passengers displaced from Watford station to either Watford High Street or Watford Junction stations.

At this point an interjection from the audience resulted in the Panel learning that the present rules regarding Freedom Pass would apply into the future. Freedom Passes would be valid on both London Underground and Overground services as far as Watford Junction station, but would not be valid on London Midland and Virgin trains services.

### **Road safety and personal security**

This was discussed earlier, with the one additional comment that the Panel would want any lighting issues dealt with as well.

### **Benefits not worth the investment**

This had been discussed earlier.

### **Loss of local bus services**

Ms Glaud confirmed that the W30 contract ran to 2013. She stressed that services in Hertfordshire, unlike in London, were provided on a commercial basis, but that the council is working with the bus operators as part of a Quality Network Partnership to provide services people need.

The Policy Officer reported a late submission from London TravelWatch officer reminding members that they should understand there were no certainties in terms of bus operation outside London because of the unregulated nature of the commercial bus market.

The Chair noted that some of the bus issues would be offset by the fact of the proposed new east to west Croxley Rail Link towards Watford Town Centre.

Ms Engert asked about bus services for the Watford Boys Grammar school accessing their school from the station. Ms Glaud was unable to answer this question, but confirmed there was no concessionary fare for school children.

Ms Glaud suggested that it would be possible to consider this issue as part of the Quality Network Partnership process.

### **Re-run Bakerloo line to Watford Junction**

Members felt they had enough information on this issue.

Members accepted this would be neither practical, nor economic.

## **Watford station serves more local passengers than Watford Junction station**

Members had discussed this issue earlier.

## **Watford Junction station is busy now and will be over capacity if the Croxley Rail Link project goes ahead**

It was confirmed by LUL that there would be enough platform capacity at Watford station to deal with the additional trains. Members accepted that the increase in passengers at Watford Junction station would be relatively small and not lead to significant crowding issues.

## **Request for improved bus services**

Members were satisfied that they had enough information to consider this issue.

## **Alternative services**

Members had discussed this issue earlier

## **23 Summary of non-material issues raised by objectors**

Members agreed that the consultation responses listed in the table summarising non-material issues raised by objectors listed in Document C were not within the remit of the Panel which was looking at the issues of hardship for passengers, should Watford station close

## **24 Addendum, Document I**

The Policy Officer then referred to the Addendum, Document I.

The Chair noted the point regarding the resilience of the proposed service and asked if there was a reversing facility between Croxley and Watford Junction stations.

LUL recognised that disruption of the line between these stations would be most problematical, however there would be no reversing facility for trains as LUL believed the cost would outweigh the benefits. LUL would deal with disruption in a number of ways – send more trains to Amersham station, reverse at Rickmansworth or Croxley stations.

The Policy Officer suggested that resilience in the future would be less, but LUL disagreed. LUL believed they could operate at a similar level of resilience for existing customers, but offer greater resilience to, say London Overground customers, by providing an alternate service.

Members were alerted to late correspondence from Karen England which raised no new issues and similarly a letter from Mr Katz who had spoken earlier.

The Chair then gave the audience one more opportunity to comment

## **25 Statement from Lester Wagman**

Mr Wagman asked about road safety. He wanted to understand how Hertfordshire Council would improve road safety along Rickmansworth Road – would they be compulsorily purchasing front gardens, for example.

The Chair then thanked all the participants and briefly described how the Panel would conclude the process with a report to The Mayor of London by 2 September 2012.

The meeting closed at 13:05