

FROM THE PAPERS

Items for “From the Papers” should be sent to Ian McKenzie at 24 Thamespoint, Fairways, Teddington, TW11 9PP (or E-Mail secretary@lurs.org.uk), and not to the Editor of this journal. Please ensure that contributions are identified by date and source publication.

03.02.21 THE TIMES – A mother is suing LU for £300K after her son died when he tumbled down steps in an Underground station. LU is disputing the claim and has told the court that the 35-year-old man, who was returning from a wedding, was trespassing and drunk at the time of his death. His body was discovered on a Sunday in 2017 at the foot of a flight of concrete steps leading off the escape bridge at Canning Town station. It is thought the IT consultant fell just before 03.00 after mistakenly straying into an area restricted to staff. The man’s mother has alleged in her claim against LU that bosses had been negligent in failing to ensure safe staffing levels, which she maintains would have led her son’s presence in the station being detected before he ventured into the off-limits area. However, LU has denied blame and claimed that the man was “intoxicated” and “trespassing”. The man, who worked for the Bar Council which represents barristers in England and Wales, could have been saved had more staff been on duty, according to his mother’s lawyers. In written submissions to the Central London County Court it is alleged that he became “trapped” in the staff-only area after emergency gates through which he had passed were mistakenly closed, preventing him from returning safely to the station platforms. There was only one staff member monitoring the station at the time. As a result, the lawyers say, the man was left wandering helplessly for about 50 minutes before falling down the steps, suffering “catastrophic head injuries”. CCTV shows the man at the top of the staircase leading to the DLR platform at 02.47. Two minutes later he fell down the steps. His body was found at 08.45. The LU barrister told the court that the man was “heavily intoxicated” when he left the wedding venue in Rotherhithe and that his blood-alcohol level was twice the legal limit for driving. Toxicology reports showed traces of cannabis and cocaine, the barrister stated. The hearing was adjourned to return for trial at a later date.

04.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – Underground and bus passengers may be advised to switch to higher-grade masks to guard against the new mutant strains of COVID-19. Two reviews of the advice on masks have been launched by the Mayor and TfL following the wildfire spread of the Kent strain, a variant so contagious that cloth masks and DIY bandanas might not be effective enough. Several countries have already asked passengers to wear high-filtration masks, which only allow very fine particles to pass through. They are disposable, slightly more expensive and are harder to breathe through. TfL has asked for guidance from Public Health England in response to scientific concerns; the Mayor is to commission an analysis by London’s own scientific advisory group on coronavirus, to focus on whether the public should be asked to switch from cloth to filters. The current mask policy is based on the idea that passengers protect each other. Although cloth masks and scarves do not filter out the virus, they are effective at reducing the spread to other people via coughs and sneezes. High filter masks would suggest a new approach where the wearer is protected by filtering out tiny droplets and particles from inhaled breath. TfL staff are already supplied with four-layer surgical masks, and the issue is whether advice to passengers needs to change.

05.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – Fresh fears for the safety of the Croydon Tramlink system have been raised after a head-on collision was narrowly averted and another tram came off the rails. Safety levels on the service have been under intense scrutiny since the crash in November 2016 when seven passengers died and a further 62 people were injured in a derailment. It has now been revealed there were three serious incidents on the tram system in the space of two-and-a-half months last year, sparking probes into what went wrong. Two trams were accidentally set on collision course on 5 August, a driver went through a stop at 25mph in Mitcham the following month, and a slow-speed derailment happened in Addiscombe on 21 October. Details of the incidents have emerged for the first time in a report to a TfL safety panel. TfL commissioner Andy Byford said: “While none of these instances resulted in injury or harm to our staff or customers, they are being taken very seriously”. The report shows a collision was averted between two trams after they were put on to the same line in opposite directions. “The trams were stopped by each driver about 100 metres apart using a normal service brake when they became aware of the conflicting movement on the single line section” it said. The incident, which happened between King Henry’s Drive and New Addington tram-stops, was blamed on “background signalling loop failure”, where one driver was given the green light to proceed by an automatic signal and the other was told to proceed by the control room. An investigation which produces

12 safety recommendations, including a review of the way controllers authorise the trams to proceed. In the second incident, a tram went through the Mitcham stop at speed and ran through a red signal before eventually being halted by the driver. This incident was blamed on the driver being “distracted”, with a probe raising concerns that the tram’s automated safety system “did not detect possible inactivity, or lack of concentration, from the driver”. The final incident happened after a driver was given distressing personal news over the radio in the middle of a shift. “The tram driver believed that they were fit to drive and while they followed the instructions, the driver failed to check when setting the points at the emergency crossover for the return journey. This resulted in a slow speed derailment of the empty tram”. Details of these incidents have also been disclosed by TfL to legal teams in the Croydon tram crash inquest, due to go ahead on 17 May.

08.02.21 METRO – Amersham station has become the 81st on the Underground network to become step-free, vastly improving access within the station and wider transport network for people with mobility needs, heavy luggage or children in buggies. The station now has two new lifts and a bridge linking the platforms to give passengers step-free access within the station, where there is also improved signage. Level access between the train platform for Metropolitan Line services and a manual boarding ramp will be available to help customers access National Rail trains at Amersham. The completion of accessibility work at Amersham means 30% of the Underground network is now step-free, with the number of stations that are step-free across the whole TfL network now totalling more than 200. Work continues at Debden, Harrow-on-the-Hill, Ickenham, Osterley, Sudbury Hill and Wimbledon Park, which are scheduled to go step-free. All Underground stations operate a turn-up-and-go service for people needing assistance on TfL services. Passengers using this service do not need to pre-book and they can request help on arrival at the station. Staff are trained to offer support and advice to help passengers with accessibility needs complete their journeys, including assisting wheelchair users by pushing their wheelchair, if required. Staff can also guide visually impaired passengers by the arm while wearing a single-use disposable sleeve to give both parties additional protection.

10.02.21 – 23.02.21 RAIL #924 – Public consultation has revealed overwhelming support for the proposed Bakerloo Line extension from Elephant & Castle, and onwards to Lewisham and Hayes. Opinions are split on the locations of the two stations planned along the Old Kent Road, perhaps to be named Burgess Park and Asylum.

10.02.21 – 23.02.21 RAIL #924 – According to new figures, King’s Cross St. Pancras was the busiest Underground station for the third year running in 2019 with 88.3M users, followed by Victoria (85.5M), Waterloo (82.9M) and Oxford Circus (78.1M). The least used was weekend-only Kensington Olympia with just 109K, well below Roding Valley (405K), Chigwell (525K) and Grange Hill (652K).

10.02.21 – 23.02.21 RAIL #924 – The shutdown of the Waterloo & City Line since March last year is likely to continue until at least April, because of low demand. However, TfL says it can be reactivated at relatively short notice. The down time is being used to improve the train fleet.

10.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – The pressure to increase Underground and bus fares annually will become “almost intolerable” unless there are radical changes in the way London’s transport network is funded, the capital’s transport chief has warned. TfL commissioner Andy Byford said annual rises in fares would be “self-defeating” as they would drive passengers back into cars and lead to a “downward spiral” of underinvestment. “You can’t keep putting the fares up”, he said. His stark warning came as London Tories joined a cross-party call to Transport Secretary Grant Shapps for the £500M a year paid by the capital’s motorists in vehicle excise duty (VED) to be returned by the Government to provide long-term funding for TfL. Mr. Byford told borough leaders that the pandemic had had an “absolutely calamitous” impact on TfL, with fares revenue down by £3B. The organisation was also reeling from the loss of 72 transport workers to COVID. Fares are due to rise by an inflation busting 2.6% from 1 March, costing travellers an extra £60M a year, under the terms of TfL’s COVID bailouts from the Government. Mr. Byford, who is seeking a further £3B bailout for the 2021/22 financial year, said TfL currently relied on fares to provide 72% of its income – a system he described as “crazy”. “That has proven to be hugely vulnerable to something as calamitous as the pandemic,” he said. “That model absolutely needs to change.” He said “that fares needed to remain “affordable”, which is why I’m arguing we should wean ourselves off this dangerous over-reliance on fares”. Asked whether the Greater London boundary charge, a £3.50-a-day levy proposed by Mayor Sadiq Khan, was a way of raising £500M a year from 2022, was still under consideration, Mr. Byford said he was aware that TfL must not “shoot ourselves in the foot” and hinder the post-COVID recovery. He said it was “just an

option” and added, “Is a boundary charge off the table? No, it is not”. Alternatives included the return of VED paid by Londoners or “maybe some kind of additional charge or levy on businesses”, he said. Today, the Mayor and five parties on the London Assembly wrote to Mr. Shapps to request the return of VED, which goes direct to the Treasury to fund road repairs, mainly outside London.

12.02.21 WATFORD OBSERVER – TfL has been accused of “environmental vandalism” of embankments on the Metropolitan Line in Pinner. Locals claim that contractors are being “excessive” with their removal of trees and vegetation that often provides a buffer against noise and light pollution from the Underground line. Emma Wallace, a Green Party GLA candidate in the upcoming elections, has compiled a report into the issue after being contacted by local environmentalists and concerned residents. Ms. Wallace said: “TfL contractors have been arriving daily with chainsaws, strimmers and tree chippers and removing huge stretches of trees and vegetation running along the Metropolitan Line between Pinner and Northwood Hills. This act of environmental vandalism has meant a biodiverse, green corridor has now been severely reduced, impacting nearby residents’ health and mental well-being, as well as removing habitat for local wildlife”. She has started a petition calling for an immediate end to the “excessive” removal of vegetation along trackside embankments and for biodiversity surveys to be carried out before any future work begins. She added: “Whilst the loss of wildlife is tragic in itself, it is also the impact on residents’ health and well-being that is of huge concern. The local community was not informed by TfL that these works were going to be carried out, consequently have not had an opportunity to raise concerns or ask for a consultation to be carried out. They are left without trees to protect them from the pollution, light and noise from frequent trains passing, on the Metropolitan Line and Chiltern Railways”. A TfL spokesperson told the Local Democracy Reporting Service that the removal of vegetation is part of an ongoing “essential maintenance programme” and that some trees have been identified as “safety risks”. The spokesperson also said: “We take our responsibilities as a good neighbour very seriously when removing trees or other vegetation from near our railway. We always do our utmost to remove only what is necessary and to leave embankments to grow where possible. We are currently carrying out an essential maintenance programme in this area and any trees or vegetation identified as safety risks must be removed. However, we can reassure people that vegetation is only removed when there is an absolute need to do so”.

12.02.21 WATFORD OBSERVER – *Letter by Dave Degen* – “TfL’s wholesale butchering of trees along the embankment between Northwood Hills and Pinner is concerning and unacceptable not least because it is just the beginning of an ongoing “essential maintenance programme”. It’s claims that “vegetation is only removed when there is an absolute need to do so” are risible. The photos show there has been sheer carnage and countless stumps of trees have been ripped out. There isn’t a tree in sight. TfL’s failure to consult locals about the works which has – and will – seriously impact their air quality and cause pollution not to mention visual amenities, calls into question further concerns about TfL’s management. Why was no one consulted? Who deemed the trees to be unsafe? Was a qualified arboriculturist engaged? Was an environmental impact assessment carried out? The alarming lack of protection to our natural environment is drawn into sharp focus. In a respiratory pandemic, living with lethal air pollution to then be ripping out the foliage is madness. The timing is telling; is it yet another nail in our coffin after the exit from the European Union and that now UK is not bound by EU standards or protection, acts which would be otherwise deemed to be criminal acts of vandalism are being sanctioned.”

12.02.21 ISLAND ECHO – The Island Line won’t reopen until mid-May due to a six-week delay in the delivery of a major £26-million upgrade of the network. It was originally hoped that the Ryde Pier Head to Shanklin route would reopen at the start of April following significant improvements to the track, infrastructure and stations. However, South Western Railway (SWR) has announced that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to unforeseen challenges, leaving the project team no choice but to push back the line’s reopening by around six weeks. When the line does reopen, services will resume with the brand new (sic!) Class 484 trains, although to date just two of the ten carriages have been delivered. The nationwide lockdown has added to the complexity of the project as teams have had to work to navigate changing restrictions on movement, and colleagues have been required to form work bubbles on the Isle of Wight to ensure sites are Covid secure. The recent increase in Covid-19 cases across the UK has also created the additional challenge of colleagues needing to isolate all along the supply chain, setting back the whole project. Vivarail, who are supplying the new class 484 trains, have been particularly affected by the pandemic with the number of engineers able to work on the new train at any one time being significantly reduced and the supplier of the traction system being unable to work at full

capacity. Whilst some elements of the project have been hit hard by lockdown restrictions, other work streams continue to make good progress. They will use this extra time to complete additional track work and bring forward elements of the project that had been planned for later in the year - including repainting stations and other minor refurbishments.

15.02.21 METRO - This month, *Poems on the Underground* is marking the 200th anniversary of the death of the poet John Keats by publishing an extract from his famous poem *Endymion*, along with works by other poets who have been inspired by Keats and his love of nature. Born in 1785, Keats began writing poetry at the age of 18 and was encouraged by his school friend, Charles Cowden Clarke, to abandon his profession as an apothecary surgeon to concentrate on poetry full time. He was heavily influenced by Shakespeare and Milton and was one of the English Romantic movement, along with Lord Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley. His final collection, published in 1820, includes *Ode to a Nightingale* and *To Autumn* – some of the poems on which his lasting fame is built. He died in Italy in 1821 at the age of 25. This isn't the first time Keats has been celebrated by London Underground as part of the capital's literary heritage. In 1912, artist Charles Sharland created a post to celebrate Hampstead's writers and poets, including Keats. In 1930, an illustration featuring Keats house, Wentworth Place, was used by the Underground in press advertisements, as his house is located a short walk from Hampstead station. The house also featured in the 1951 poster designed by Sheila Robinson celebrating some of London's museums that honour its literary lions. These art works can now be seen on displays at London Bridge and Hampstead Underground stations.

17.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – Transport chiefs are drawing up a “compelling campaign” to get workers back into central London by reassuring them about COVID safety measures on the Underground. A PR blitz is scheduled once lockdown ends to encourage passengers to return to public transport, amid reassurances that they won't be “rammed in” to pre-epidemic levels. Andy Byford, London's transport commissioner, admits there is a “confidence issue” among the public. He believes that earlier instructions to avoid the Underground and buses created a false perception that public transport was “dangerous”. Asked by London council leaders what he could do to restore passenger numbers, he said a recovery plan was being drafted by TfL, and would include a PR campaign, plus “an education campaign to set out the facts, to make sure customers understand what we've done that is different, to make sure that they understand they won't be rammed in because we will maintain social distancing by running a full service”. He said that connections would be boosted when the Northern Line extension to Battersea opened in “late summer or autumn” and held out hope that Crossrail could open by the end of the year. But he said big employers had to play their part too by ensuring offices were “COVID secure”.

17.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – Editorial – “London's transport network is key to getting the City back to work and firing up our economic recovery. There is at present a confidence issue about the Underground. This is understandable amid a pandemic and months of people being told to stay home and avoid indoor spaces. But, as TfL will promote in a new campaign, when the time is right Londoners should feel confident about using the Underground and of its low risk of infection. Indeed, experts from Imperial College London carried out a second round of tests last autumn on surfaces and in the air on the Underground and found no traces of COVID. The latest survey from Transport Focus and London TravelWatch illustrates that passengers feel increasingly reassured about using public transport, with three-quarters of passengers saying they are satisfied with cleanliness in relation to COVID, with the only growing area of concern being the failure of some passengers to wear face masks. This is not a call for people to pile back onto carriages. But the Underground will be a crucial artery to London's recovery and it is important that, when the time comes, people not only are safe but feel safe when using it”.

18.02.21 DAILY EXPRESS - TfL fares are predicted to rise overall by 2.6% on 1 March as the service works on bailing out its debt, while daily fees for motorists in London will rise to £12.50. Former Brexit Party MEP and chairman of *Unlocked*, Ben Habib, said: “The Mayor wants to levy anyone who comes into London that's going to have a detrimental effect not just on the workers in London but all those people who live outside of London and have to commute for their work. It's going to put a strain on people who have families that partially live outside and inside London. It's economically daft and it's socially reprehensible. On top of that, he wants to increase Underground fares, the trains are already empty. You can't get blood out of a stone. This is a statistic everyone needs to know, 18% of average wages in London go on transport. He is kicking Londoners in the shins and remember this is a regressive tax, it hits the lowest paid the hardest. It doesn't affect the wealthy; it affects the white van driver. It affects essential workers and construction workers. All those that kept London going during

the lockdown. His payback to all those people who kept London going is to kick them in the financial shins". It comes as a TfL official said it needs at least two years of Government support to be financially stable. TfL commissioner Andy Byford, also suggested Crossrail, which will see the new Elizabeth Line run from Berkshire to Essex via central London, may open sooner than the first half of 2022. TfL's finances have been hit by the coronavirus pandemic, leading to it requiring a £1.8B Government bailout in November to keep services running until March this year. Speaking on BBC's Politics London programme, Mr. Byford said: "TfL absolutely will require additional subsidy for the next year and the year beyond that. Obviously, we will do our bit to cut our costs, we have in the past taken £1B off the cost base, there are further savings baked into this financial sustainability plan. But the frank or stark reality is that without Government support, and with the chaos that COVID and the decimation on our finances that COVID has wrought, we absolutely will be needing financial support in the short term and we're making a very strong case to Government to achieve just that". The Crossrail project was initially due to be completed in December 2018 but has been delayed and is over budget, with £825M more Government funding given last month in the form of a loan. Its budget was set at £15.9B in 2007 but it is now expected to cost around £18B.

23.02.21 EVENING STANDARD – The backers of London's version of the *New York High Line* are set to launch £35M fundraising campaign to pay for the project. The scheme, which would see a three-quarter-mile stretch of disused railway viaducts turned into a linear park, which was originally used by the North London Railway in Camden, is moving into its next phase. The charity behind the proposal awarded the contract last week to a consortium led by New York-based James Corner Field Operations, the firm behind the original High Line. The London version would stretch from Camden Gardens, near Camden Town station, to York Way near King's Cross. There might be an option later to extend it further into Islington. Simon Pitkeathley, of the *Camden Highline* charity, said the route, which could accommodate up to 2.5M users a year, would be funded through a mix of public sector and trust grants, donations and sponsorship, which could include naming rights. He said he was hoping for the backing of a high-profile Londoner and would like to have Ricky Gervais on board. The comedian lives in Camden and said one of his proudest moments was being asked to headline a fundraiser for the *New York High Line*. The *Camden Highline* would probably be built in three sections each costing about £12M and completed by 2024.

25.02.21 METRO – Piccadilly Line trains will not stop at South Kensington station from 27 February until spring 2022 as work gets underway to replace all five escalators at the station. The escalators, which were installed in 1973, are at the end of their lifespan and have become unreliable. They are the highest priority escalators for replacement on the Underground network. The station will remain open for Circle and District Line passengers who need to travel for legally permitted reasons. At almost 50 years old, the escalators are some of the oldest on the network and have come to the end of their life. Once installed, the new escalators will serve the station for decades to come and will have the latest UV light sanitising devices, which have been proven to improve sanitisation levels on the handrails by at least 50%. The work will mean that the station – which before the pandemic saw almost 34M journeys each year and provides an important gateway to the world-famous cultural attraction in the area – will have five new high-performing escalators for decades to come.