



London Metro Division London and South East branch Newsletter: April 2025

railfuture

CAMPAIGNING FOR MINIMUM OF 4 TRAINS PER HOUR IN SOUTH LONDON

How quickly a year passes. This time last year we issued our 'Rail Manifesto for London' in anticipation of the May 2024 Mayor and Assembly Elections.

One of our election campaigns was to rectify the discrepancy in service levels that exists north and south of the Thames. With many Underground services, North London has high frequency rail services which have not been matched by national rail services which largely operate south of the river.

A related election campaign was to have a standard minimum service level of trains every 15 minutes where practical. In South London this was largely the case prior to covid, but the reductions introduced during the pandemic have not all been reversed.

In our view, all of London's rail services should be in effect 'turn up and go' and this means a minimum service level of 4 trains per hour (tph).

Specifically the improved services we are seeking in South London are as follows:

- On the Hounslow Loop, to increase off-peak service to 4tph, to match the peak time service.
- On the Shepperton branch and Kingston Loop, an additional 2tph from Shepperton to London routed via the north side of Kingston loop (Richmond).
- On the Wimbledon to Epsom via Worcester Park route, run 4 tph to be achieved by increasing the Waterloo to Guildford via Epsom service by 2tph.
- On the Caterham and Tattenham Corner services, to restore the peak-time Victoria services.
- Off-peak on the Sutton to Victoria route, increase the service from 2tph to 4tph (effectively increasing West Croydon to Victoria to 4tph and Sutton to West Croydon to 6tph).

- On the West London Line (East Croydon to Watford Junction via Clapham Junction) to increase Southern services to 2tph off-peak.
- To reintroduce the stopping service between London Bridge and East Croydon via New Cross Gate (2tph), with possible continuation to Caterham/ Tattenham Corner.
- On the Catford Loop (Brixton - Nunhead - Ravensbourne) increase the current service to 4tph (either by re-instating Thameslink 2tph service Orpington to Kentish Town, or by a Southeastern 2tph service Orpington to Victoria service via the Loop).
- On Sundays, on the Hounslow loop increase services to at least 2tph.
- On Sundays, improve Tattenham Corner service so it has 2 through trains per hour.
- On Sundays, increase Epsom to London Bridge via Norwood Junction service to 2tph.
- Introduce a Sunday Service on the Bromley North to Grove Park (2tph) to facilitate Bromley to Central London (Charing Cross) travel.

We have formulated details for each of these improvements, and will be pursuing them with the relevant authorities and companies.

Although we have concentrated south of the river, if there are any services north of the river you consider should have an improved services, please contact us.

Your involvement will result in action on our part.

IMPROVING SERVICES ON THE CATFORD LOOP

The Catford Loop carries a suburban stopping passenger service from central London to South East London and Kent. It is named as it forms a loop line from Shortlands (just west of Bromley South) to Brixton near which it meets two main lines, one into London Victoria and one into London Blackfriars station.

Our websites: www.railfuture.org.uk | www.railfuture.org.uk/London-Metro | www.railwatch.org.uk
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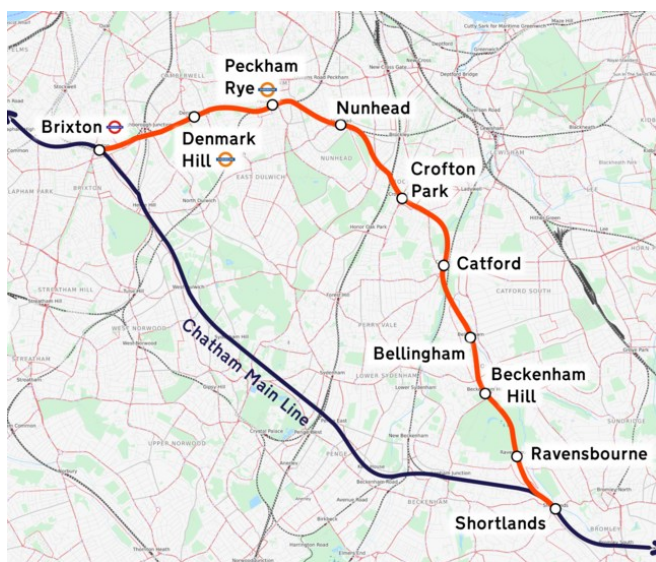


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Prior to covid, the Catford Loop had a train service of 4 trains per hour (tph). That was reduced to 2 tph during covid, but has never been re-instated. As a consequence the service is inconvenient and overcrowded. The affected stations are Denmark Hill, Peckham Rye, Nunhead, Crofton Park, Catford, Bellingham, Beckenham Hill, Ravensbourne, Shortlands and Bromley South.

Our view is that the Catford Loop service should be restored to 4tph. This could be achieved either by re-instating the 2tph Thameslink service Orpington to Kentish Town, or by a Southeastern service from Orpington to Victoria service via the Loop (2tph).



The Catford Loop is an example where Railfuture can act in conjunction with a local pressure group, the frustrations of passengers in this case having resulted in the creation of a campaign group.

We encourage local pressure groups seeking better rail services to contact us.

We may be able lend assistance or work with you on common goals.

BAN ON NON-FOLDING E-BIKES ON TfL

All unfolded e-bikes were banned from TfL services from 31 March 2025, following safety concerns.

There had been a number of recent incidents when e-bikes had caught fire on trains and platforms. The issue was of particular concern to the transport unions, creating in effect a dispute between unions and TfL, with the unions calling for an outright ban.

The London Mayor rather belatedly got on board, and agreed to a ban. He said 'The safety of Londoners is my top priority and, while most e-bikes are safe, there have been a small number of incidents where non-foldable e-bikes have caught fire on the transport system, which have caused me great concern'.

It seems that although most e-bikes are safe, there are a considerable number that have been adapted or use cheap conversion kits. As there is no easy way to immediately spot the difference and so whether a bike is safe or not, a blanket ban is determined to be the safest course of action.

It should be noted that this does not affect any other type of bicycle. Even folding e-bikes are still allowed, as they are purpose-built to higher standards. The ban also does not apply to the Woolwich Ferry, river services generally or the new Silvertown Tunnel Cycle Shuttle Service.

Of course, all forms of non-folding bikes are banned from buses and trams, and that remains the case.

The London Fire Brigade has welcomed the move, noting it has seen an e-bike or e-scooter fire every other day, on average, and that there is a particular problem with conversion kit and modified e-bikes.

The consequence of breach? A fine of up to £1000 may apply for non-compliance.

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DOES HEATHROW EXPRESS (OR GATWICK EXPRESS) MAKE SENSE ANYMORE?

One of the benefits of the Elizabeth Line is that it reaches all operational terminals of Heathrow Airport, and so provides a quick and affordable link between the Airport and many London destinations, including the central shopping and business districts.

There are now three ways to get to Heathrow Airport by rail, either the Underground, the Elizabeth Line or Heathrow Express.

The tube is the slowest, but the cheapest (under £6, in about an hour to central London). The Elizabeth Line is faster but a bit more expensive (about £12, in about 30 minutes to central London). Heathrow Express looks increasingly out of place, being expensive (£25) and serving only Paddington so that onward connections are necessary to go anywhere else.

It seems Heathrow Express is losing passengers to the Elizabeth Line, and one wonders whether it will be commercially viable for much longer. To combat falling passengers, the Heathrow Express experimental £10 advance fare is now to become permanent. However, it is a rather extreme 'advanced' ticket, needing to be bought at least 45 days ahead of time. Tickets can only be bought on its website or app.

This highlights an issue. Do so called premium express rail services to airports, such as Heathrow and Gatwick, actually make sense bearing in mind they take up considerable capacity on the network which prevents other more useful rail services.

In the case of Gatwick Express, an analysis of last year's passenger usage figures show that only around 12% of passengers from Gatwick Airport to zone 1 and Clapham Junction actually use the Gatwick Express.

Both Heathrow Express and Gatwick Express charge a considerable premium for its service, a service which in reality is no better than cheaper rail alternatives. True,

the uninitiated tourist sold airport express tickets on flights or at airports may be duped into buying a more expensive ticket than necessary, one supposes to the ultimate benefit of the railway or in the case of Heathrow Express, Heathrow Airport, but should airport express services really be maintained in order to wring extra pounds from the uninitiated and uninformed passenger? Surely our rail services should be better than that.

NEW RAIL SERVICES TO HEATHROW AIRPORT

Whilst on the subject of airports, there are two current proposals to improve rail access to Heathrow Airport, **which Railfuture is campaigning in support.**

The Western rail link to Heathrow is a proposed 6.5km rail extension that would connect the Great Western Main Line with Heathrow, creating a direct link to enable passengers from the Thames Valley, the South West and South Wales to reach Heathrow Airport without needing to travel into London.

The Southern rail link is a proposed rail link between Heathrow and railways in the south west of London. This would link Heathrow with Staines, and could potentially enable direct trains east into London Waterloo as well as west to places such as Basingstoke, Woking and Guildford.

MEETINGS DATES FOR 2025

Our next meeting will be on Thursday 15 May 2025 at the basement room of the Alan Baxter Gallery, 75 Cowcross Street, Farringdon, starting 7pm.

The dates for our following meetings are:

- Thursday 10 July 2025 (note, the second not the usual third Thursday of the month)
- Thursday 18 September 2025
- Thursday 20 November 2025.

We hope to see you there.

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