

# How art can rescue inner city stations

Although train companies often run excellent services, passengers' perception is sometimes undermined by the appearance of the stations.

They often appear unloved. Nowhere is this more obvious than in inner city areas. Now artists could be coming to the rescue.

Train services at neighbouring stations London Fields in Hackney and Cambridge Heath in Tower Hamlets are now the best they have been for a long time, thanks to years of effort by rail campaigners.

The number of passengers using the station doubled in a year after a new timetable was introduced in December 2005. But the new passengers are not impressed by the state of the stations.

"I think this station is one of the most disgusting I have ever used," said one passenger in a recent survey. "Shameful," said another. So rail campaigners have recruited artists to improve the ambience of the station.

Hackney has the biggest colony of artists in Europe and the Cambridge Heath and London Fields Rail User Group asked them to come up with visionary ways to improve the stations.

Our pictures give an idea of how the London Fields-based Free Form Arts Trust could transform the look of London Fields station.

The trust has compiled a 12-page brochure showing how art work at the entrance, in the subways and on the platforms could be applied.

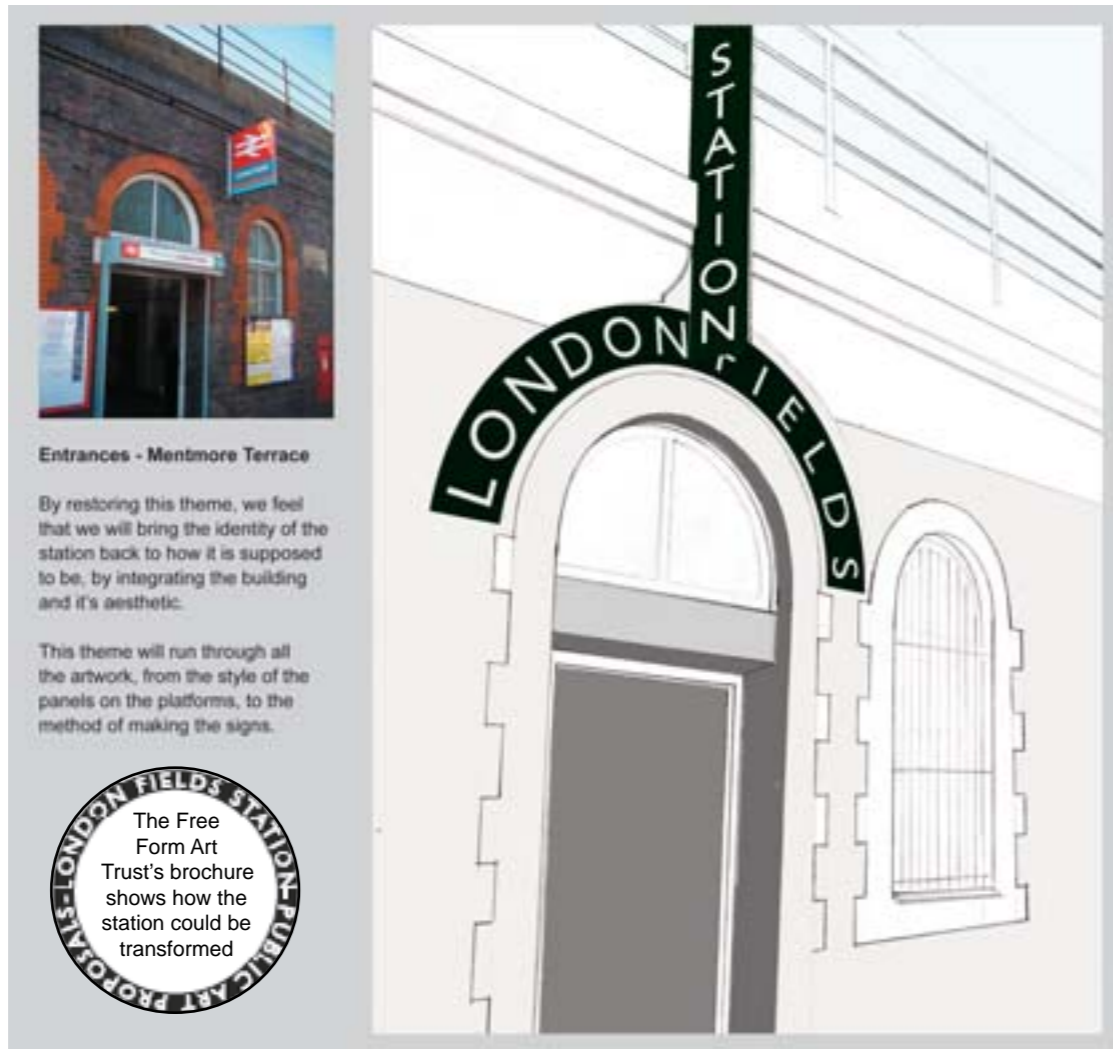
Work at London Fields would fit in with Hackney Council's successful campaign to improve the borough's image. It has already invested thousands of pounds in reopening London Fields lido which has been a haven for keen swimmers, providing a heated open air swimming pool that was still being used in December.

One of the artists' aims is to bring the station closer in appearance to the trees and grass of nearby London Fields.

The rail user group is keen to extend the greenery of London Fields into the station and expect that more and more people travelling from outside the borough to visit one of London's rare open-air lidos will come by train.

Both Hackney's Councillor Guy Nicholson and train operator ONE's Perry Ramsey have responded favourably to the ideas. But funding still has to be agreed.

The station is also only five minutes away from Hackney Town Hall and the shops of the town centre. Already many people visiting the town hall and nearby Hackney Empire theatre use the station. London Fields could become the new green gateway to Hackney.



Entrances - Mentmore Terrace

By restoring this theme, we feel that we will bring the identity of the station back to how it is supposed to be, by integrating the building and it's aesthetic.

This theme will run through all the artwork, from the style of the panels on the platforms, to the method of making the signs.



**GATEWAY:** The railway arch, right, which leads from the station entrance to London Fields and the newly reopened lido. Pictured are: Rail campaigner and Railwatch editor Ray King, left, former station manager Tim McCarthy, lido campaigner Mike Martin, Hackney Councillor Guy Nicholson, Free Form's Joel Parkes, ONE's route director Perry Ramsey, Hackney transport planner and Railfuture member Roger Blake and Free Form's Alan Rossiter



Platforms - Artwork Panels

London Fields Station platforms currently present a very utilitarian public face to commuters.

We are recommending that we create a specific identity for the station with colourful mural panels depicting local sites of interest as per the interior panels on the platform walls.

Our aim is to create a sense of welcome.



Interior Wall - Artwork Panels

At present the walls are painted all in one colour, there is no sense of welcome there is no location map.

Our proposal is to enhance the internal spaces inspired by London transport posters depicting scenes of London Fields with people playing cricket, swimming in the Lido, sunbathing on the grass and local landmarks such as the Town Hall and Hackney Empire. The aim of the panoramic artwork is to create a welcoming environment and strong visual identity for the station that would also be reflected in a location maps within the same style.



## News in brief

**Thameslink go-ahead:** The Government has granted legal approval for Thameslink 2000. Now all the project needs is funds.  
**Moving trains:** A new website maps trains on the move on Britain's rail network. Go to [www.traintimes.org.uk/map/](http://www.traintimes.org.uk/map/) to find out more. The site

is the work of Matthew Somerville.  
**Fair price:** Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authority funding of £20,000 has secured a two hourly Huddersfield-Manchester Victoria service for 52 weeks. This is based on marginal costings by Northern Rail.

Rail campaigners believe this is a good way of arriving at a fair price.  
**Network threat:** Rail campaigners have been warned that a new threat to the network has emerged in a proposed new procedure called "short-term network change". This allows Net-

work Rail to remove parts of the infrastructure that they are not currently needed, but avoiding the need for "network change" consultation. Do your own research by going to the Network Rail website, typing in "network change". On the seventh page of the 410 items you find: PFC 041  
**Railfuture lottery winners:** September: Mary Hill, Miss P Salkeld,

D Peters. October: B Balmain, T J Jolley, M Edgell. November: K A Porter, R White, A R Bull.  
**Railfuture national draw winners:** £500 M Bell, Gateshead; £200 J Saunders, High Wycombe; £100 Joyce Barkla, Exeter; £50 K Richmond, York; £20 M Honniball, Bourne; £10 David Horwill, Sunbury, Alan Taylor, Northwich, W Emmerson, Belfast, G Mann, Ste-

vention, S Hope, Norwich, A Birt, Gourock, H Read, Shrewsbury, J Ward, Newark.  
**Wrexham direct:** Members of the Shrewsbury-Chester Rail Users' Association were delighted to learn at a meeting in Wrexham on 20 November from Mr Andy Hamilton of Laing Rail about the proposed Wrexham-London Marylebone train service. The Of-

fice of Rail Regulation is expected to decide in April whether the service qualifies for an "open access" agreement. It would not be part of a rail franchise and would receive no public subsidy. The intended London service would call on the experience gained by Hull Trains. There have already been talks with Network Rail about train paths in the West Midlands.