

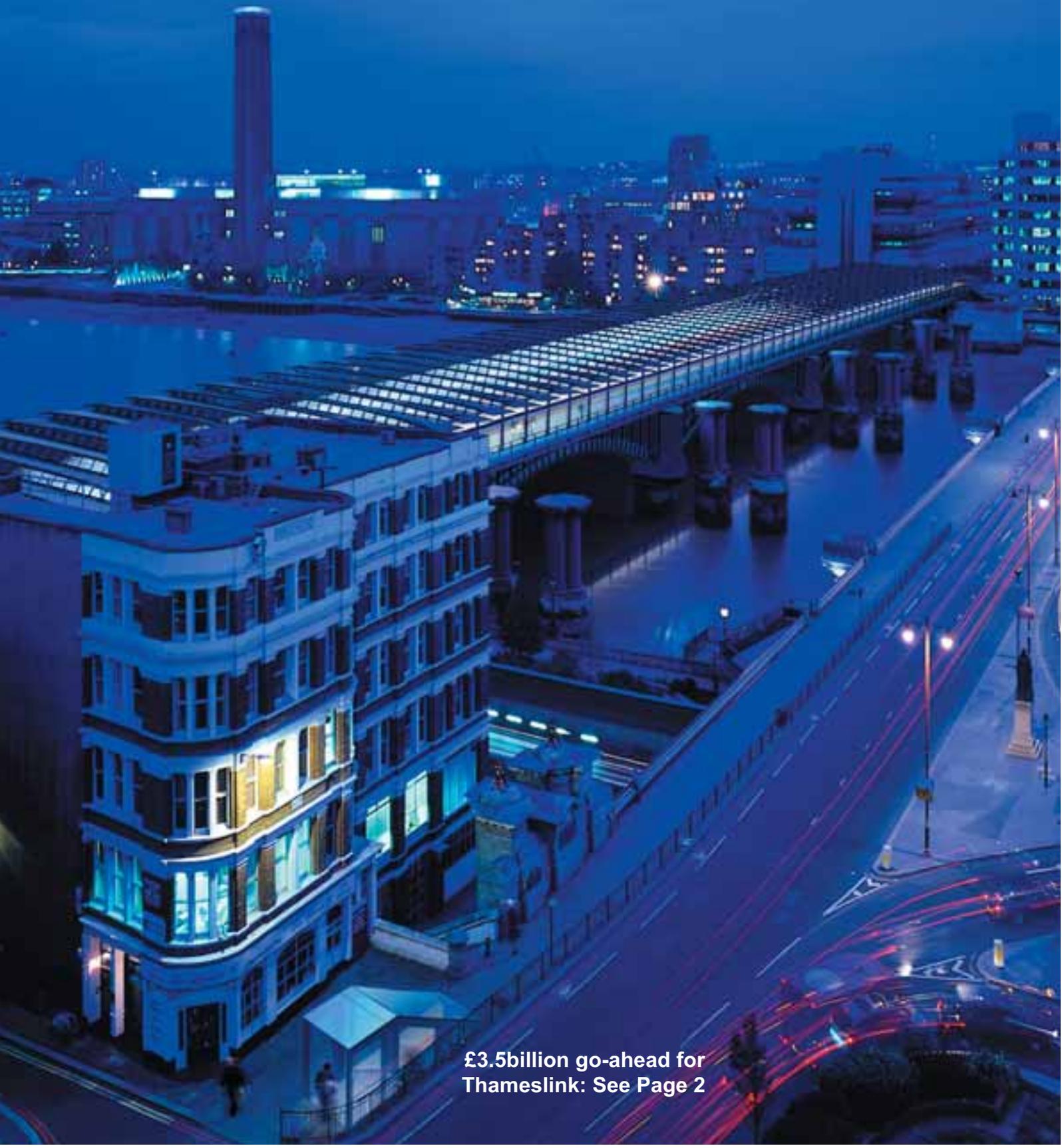
*rail*watch

AN INDEPENDENT VOICE FOR RAIL USERS

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£3.5billion go-ahead for
Thameslink: See Page 2

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Railfuture

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Membership

£21 per year

Family: Plus £2 for each extra person. Pensioners, students and unemployed: £14

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Elections

The board is elected annually and nomination forms can be obtained from the Returning Officer, PO Box 7690, Hinckley LE10 9WJ. You can also download a form from www.railfuture.org.uk

Page 1 picture

This is how Blackfriars Bridge will look when the Thameslink scheme is completed. The station will extend over the bridge with a new exit on the South Bank to provide better access to the Tate Modern – the tower in the background of the Network Rail picture.

The £3.5billion scheme was given the go-ahead by Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly in July but will not be completed until 2015.

By then Cambridge will also be part of the Thameslink scheme which will eventually increase the number of trains travelling through London every hour from eight to 24.

Work will begin at Blackfriars in 2009, followed by a new viaduct at Borough Market, London Bridge.

Railfuture campaigned for the original Thameslink scheme and has been pressing for the go-ahead for Thameslink for a decade.

It will bring benefits to Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Greater London, Hertfordshire, Kent and Sussex but also reduce overcrowding on the Underground.

As Railwatch went to press there were even reports that London's £16billion Crossrail might get the go-head after the City of London agreed to contribute £350million to the cost of building it.

Crossrail would open in 2015 and deliver economic benefits worth £30billion over 60 years.

£300million has already been spent on the project and 400 people are working on it. A preparatory shaft has been dug at Moorgate. See picture on page 4.

Railfuture winners

Winners of the monthly lottery were as follows: May: P A Moore, C Martindale, W J Berridge; June: R I Kenney, Mrs M Skilton, M Parker; July: M H Lloyd, M L Kewell, B Balmain.

If you would like to help Railfuture raise funds and also have a chance to win monthly cash prizes, please fill in the form enclosed with this Railwatch.

Rolling stock inquiry

Railfuture chairman Mike Crowhurst made a submission to the rolling stock inquiry being held by the Competition Commission. Among the points he made was the failure of rolling stock companies to make use of old but serviceable stock.

He also called on the companies to be more pro-active in commissioning new stock.

He suggested that there should be regulation of the companies by the Office of Rail Regulation and called for train operators to be encouraged to buy their own trains as a way of increasing competition in the rolling stock market and bringing down costs.

LOCAL ACTION

Railfuture has regional groups which are involved in local issues and come together to support Railfuture on national campaigns. Here we give news of local action in the Railfuture regions.

London and South East

■ ■ Anglia

The Greater Anglia rail utilisation strategy kept rail campaigners busy in the spring and summer. Chingford line rail users was one of the groups which responded to the Network Rail consultation. It strongly supported the idea of reinstating four tracks along the Lea Valley. It also called for the reinstatement of the Hall Farm curve which would allow Chingford trains to go to Stratford, as well as via Hackney Downs to Liverpool Street. The group pointed out that Angel Road station has good potential connections with east-west bus services along the North Circular Road and is close to the IKEA and Tesco stores, but the poor level of service and inconvenient access are a heavy deterrent to passengers.

■ ■ Barking-Gospel Oak

The Barking to Gospel Oak Line Users have met managers from MTR Laing which in November takes over their line and the revamped East London line as part of the new London Rail Concession. In December, the Monday-Friday train service will also apply on Saturday and there will be extra trains on Sunday. From December 2009, there will be four trains an hour from Monday to Saturday, with new air-conditioned stock. By 2010 there will be four trains an hour on Sundays too. But the users group is already predicting severe overcrowding if only two-car trains are used.

The Department for Transport has also announced a funding grant of £18.5million to upgrade the line so it can carry more freight from key ports in the South-East, including the new development at Thames Gateway.

This work will also benefit passenger services, as the improved signalling will clear the way for more trains.

But the campaigners say: "Sadly (and we believe shortsightedly), electrification is not on the immediate agenda, so passengers will suffer all the inconvenience of major engineering work for less-than-optimum gain due to the current inexplicable antipathy of the rail industry and government to further electrification."

"We will continue to press strongly for the faster, cleaner and more efficient services that electrification would bring to our line."

■ ■ Uckfield-Lewes hope

A delegation from the Wealden Line Campaign has met Rail Minister Tom Harris to discuss plans to restore through trains between Lewes and Uckfield. After a presentation, by the campaign's director Brian Hart, Mr Harris said: "I would really like to see this go ahead. I think you have a very good case."

He said the next stage is the production of a robust business case to establish costs, opportunities and a delivery mechanism for the project. It is anticipated this can be formulated alongside Network Rail's forthcoming study into reopening, which is expected to take about six months. Mr Harris added: "I want this to succeed, it's a good project."

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