

New rail link under the River Thames



DOWN IT GOES: The boring machine is craned in Picture: DLR

Tunnelling began in April to create another rail link under the River Thames in east London.

It will be the fourth new rail crossing in east London in the past 10 years and will open in 2009.

The latest £180million project will build a 1.5 mile tunnel from King George V station on the existing DLR network north of the Thames to Woolwich town centre, south of the river.

The DLR station will be next to National Rail's Woolwich Arsenal station. The extension is part of TfL's five-year £10billion investment programme.

It is being designed and constructed by AMEC for Woolwich Arsenal Rail Enterprises (WARE), a consortium of AMEC and the Royal Bank of Scotland. The work is being carried out by AMEC which employs 44,000 people in 40 countries.

DLR director Jonathan Fox said: "I'm sure this new extension and the Woolwich Arsenal DLR station will be a tremendous asset for London and the local community, continuing DLR's excellent record in supporting and generating London's development and growth."

"The DLR's most recent extension, to London City Airport, was completed by AMEC ahead of schedule

and on budget; we are confident Woolwich Arsenal will be equally successful."

The Mayor of London Ken Livingstone officially launched the tunnelling scheme on 3 April. The tunnel will take 15 months with 104,000 cubic metres of material being removed, and taken away by barges.

The new line will link Woolwich to London City Airport in five minutes, Canary Wharf in 19 minutes, Stratford in 20 minutes, and Bank in 27 minutes. In the peak period, trains could leave every four minutes.

The line will connect with North Kent main line rail services and will help to deliver people to the 2012 Olympic Games.

At Stratford, work is already under way to provide a double-track island terminus for the DLR line from Lewisham and Canary Wharf.

Existing river crossings

Both the Jubilee line extension tunnel and the DLR link between the Isle of Dogs and Lewisham opened in 1999. The tunnel for the Channel Tunnel rail link was completed at Thurrock last year and will begin operation next year.

The next tunnel: Crossrail



ALL SET: The 540-ton boring machine is assembled Picture: DLR

WAY TO GO: Cranes beside King George V dock lift the boring machine before lowering it into the trench for the new light rail line from north of the river to Woolwich Picture: DLR

Now the capital is waiting for East London Line, Thameslink and Crossrail

London is waiting for a whole series of improvements to rail. Work is now under way at last on extensions to the East London Line after a series of setbacks and false starts. Bridges are being rebuilt to clear the way for train services from West Croydon, Crystal Palace and New Cross to continue beyond the

existing end station (Shoreditch) to Dalston Junction where they will provide connections to the North London Line which 40 years ago was being considered for closure! In fact a post-2010 project should see East London Line trains running through on to the North London Line. In south London another possibility is for East London Line

trains to run to Clapham Junction. Railfuture's hopes that the North London Line would be extended across the River Thames to Woolwich - to link the heavy rail networks of north and south London - have been dashed by the planned Doclands Light Railway takeover of part of the North London Line. But this aim could still be achieved

if Crossrail does eventually get the go-ahead. Crossrail line one would take over the line east of Custom House and, via another Thames rail tunnel, link into the south London rail network at Woolwich. Railfuture would have liked to have seen heavy rail services running on to Crossrail near Custom House. We are also waiting to

hear what prospects there are for Thameslink expansion which years ago Railtrack said would be a relatively simple project. The public inquiry is expected to give its verdict later this year. For maps of the Crossrail project, see <http://www.crossrail.co.uk/> and click on maps and downloads. East London Line maps: <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/rail/initiatives/ell-route-map.shtml>

The DLR extension to Woolwich <http://developments.dlr.co.uk/extensions/woolwich/index.shtml> The Thameslink 2000 project <http://www.networkrail.co.uk/engineeringprojects/tl2k/tl2k.htm> and <http://www.tfl.gov.uk/rail/initiatives/thameslink.shtml>