

East London Line closure



LONDON UNDERGROUND'S East London line is to close from December 2007 until June 2010. Transport for London (TfL) is beginning the line's expansion and its connection with the North London railway, which will be transferred to TfL.

Following a recent public consultation meeting, Socialist Party councillors Ian Page and Chris Flood have submitted a motion to Lewisham council, welcoming the extension of the East London line but expressing concern with the 30 month closure plan. It commits the council to lobby TfL to consider a phased closure to carry out the extension works.

Of course some period of complete line closure will be necessary on technical and engineering grounds. But TfL's proposed transport replacement arrangements are not 'fit for purpose'. Substitute bus services will be painfully slow. Using the small capacity of the Docklands Light Railway as an interlink will also mean increased journey times and more overcrowding. In reality residents will be forced to go through central London overground termini like London Bridge or Cannon Street and to pay an extra fare each time for the privilege.

At the consultation meeting the temporary re-zoning of London Bridge station was 'ruled out', because Southern Trains estimate they would lose £100m revenue. Ian Page challenged this decision and also asked what Southern Trains' estimate was of the extra profit they will earn if London Bridge *isn't* re-zoned. For some reason that figure 'can't be worked out'!

This isn't good enough. With Oyster card technology, London Bridge could easily be re-zoned for 'transit journeys' that start and finish outside Zone One. The Department for Transport could easily instruct the private train operating companies to introduce Oyster before the East London Line is closed.

But New Labour never takes on its big business friends in the privatised public services - unless they are pressured to do so. That's why Ian and Chris have launched a petition to back up their motion to the council, calling for a phased closure of the East London line and the temporary re-zoning of London Bridge.



■ If you want to sign the petition, or want copies to get your friends and neighbours to sign, contact Ian and Chris at the Socialist Party address below.

Your Socialist Party councillors' surgery times

Chris Flood
Telephone 020-8694-3623
Email: chris.flood@mac.com

Ian Page
Telephone 020-8692-0435
Email: ianpage_sp@hotmail.com

First Saturday of the month
11am to 12noon at Honor Oak Community Centre, Turnham Road, Honor Oak estate, SE4

Third Saturday of the month
10am to 11am, Telegraph Hill Centre, Kitto Road, New Cross, SE14

Third Monday of the month
6pm to 7pm, Sector J Clubroom, off Coston Walk, Honor Oak Estate, SE4

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Local Socialist Party meetings

Come along to discuss with Lewisham Socialist Party and our two councillors at our weekly meetings.

The Lewisham branch of the Socialist Party meets most Thursdays at 7-30pm at the Toad's Mouth Too Café. The café is near Brockley station on Brockley Rd, just after Brockley Cross.

Phone 020-8988-8777 for details.

I would like to join the Socialist Party get more info sign the East London line petition

Name.....

Address.....

Telephone..... E:mail.....

Send to Lewisham Socialist Party, PO Box 24697, London E11 1YD. Phone: 020 8988 8777

e-mail: info@socialistparty.org.uk www.socialistparty.org.uk

Protecting the old and vulnerable

THE COUNCIL'S 2007-08 budget cuts spending on adult social care, affecting the elderly and people with disabilities and their carers. Day centre staffing levels will be reduced and other 'staffing changes savings' (cuts) made. Transport for shopping, day centre visits and evening clubs will be cut.

The budget also agreed to begin a formal 'consultation' on increased charges and changing the eligibility criteria for care.

The Socialist Party councillor and health worker, Chris Flood, exposed the reality of what an eligibility criteria review will mean. Currently, people qualify for care if they have what are termed 'substantial needs', but this criteria will be split into 'greater' and 'lesser' needs. At the March council meeting Chris read out some of these categories: people who, without help, would remain in the same clothes day and night, wet or soil themselves, would dehydrate or become malnourished, or would have accidents or serious mishaps. He challenged the other parties to say which were the 'greater needs' they would keep care services for and which were the 'lesser needs' they would cut.

Whatever the 'review' recommends, the Socialist Party councillors will never vote to cut services to our old and vulnerable.

www.socialistparty.org.uk

020 8988 8777

info@socialistparty.org.uk



Give young people a chance... 'Defend our education'

PARENTS AND school staff care about education. But it seems Lewisham's New Labour Mayor and Cabinet don't care what we think. Instead of listening to our views, they are imposing plans that will damage education in the borough.

Local primary schools overwhelmingly rejected the council's plans to allow Haberdasher's Aske's Academy to turn Monson primary in New Cross into their 'feeder' school. After all, Aske's' control over its own procedures has already distorted local secondary admissions. The council's plan means upsetting local primary education as well. But Tony Blair wants more schools to become independent Academies, so Lewisham's New Labour councillors are pushing ahead.

After years of ignoring local campaigners, the council were finally forced to agree that a new secondary school will be built. But they couldn't resist throwing in their latest untested initiatives to experiment on our children. They want the school to be an 'all-through' school for pupils from 3-16, controlled by the governors of Prendergast School. Less than 8% of replies to their latest consultation endorsed these proposals. But the Mayor thinks he knows best.

Now they've launched a consultation about support for special needs pupils through a glossy parents leaflet. Well it certainly glosses over the real issues. Pupils who would have previously been taught in special schools will be placed in mainstream classes. But, unless additional resources are found to properly fund genuine 'inclusion', these plans will leave young people without the support they need.

Just like our National Health Service (NHS), generations of people - not least Labour voters - fought for good quality comprehensive education for every young person. Now we find Blair and Brown's New Labour are trying to take away what we have won in the past.

That's why the Socialist Party has supported the 'Defend Education in Lewisham' Campaign, linking up parents, staff and unions in opposing the council's damaging proposals. Children only have one chance for a decent education to start them off in life. We have to make sure Lewisham's young people have that chance.

Socialist News

An update from your Telegraph Hill ward
Socialist Party councillors
Chris Flood and Ian Page



A packed public meeting launched the 'Defend Education in Lewisham' campaign earlier this year.

Inside:

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Councillors' Report



SINCE LAST May's elections Lewisham has been a 'hung council', with no party having an overall majority. With 26 Labour councillors (plus the Mayor), 17 Lib Dems, six Greens, three Tories and the two Socialist Party councillors, Ian Page and Chris Flood (pictured top right), every vote at council meetings has a direct impact on the services Lewisham council provides. So how have Lewisham councillors voted on the key decisions that have come before them in the past year?

Fighting for a new school... & Ladywell pool

The first meeting of the new council in June debated a motion to force the Mayor to look for a different site for the long-fought for new secondary school in North Lewisham - and save Ladywell Leisure Centre from demolition. Who backed it?

Supporting tenants' and leaseholders right to vote for their landlord?

At July's meeting, Chris and Ian moved a motion to give council tenants and leaseholders the right to a ballot on transferring their homes to the Lewisham Homes 'Arms-Length Management' company (ALMO). Did anyone else support tenants' and leaseholders' right to vote for their landlord?

Defending the NHS?

In September councillors debated a motion from the Lewisham Pensioners' Forum, welcoming increased public funding for the NHS but opposing 'market restructuring' of our health service, and "the drain upon hospital budgets of private finance initiative (PFI) deals". Who backed the pensioners' campaign to defend the NHS?

Opposing cuts to council services?

In September the New Labour Mayor proposed £3.44 million cuts, including Children and Young People's services. Who opposed these cuts?

Curbing councillors' allowances?

While services were being cut, a 3% increase in councillors allowances was being proposed. The Mayor now gets £64,370 a year. How many councillors voted against giving themselves a bigger pay rise than nurses will get?

Questioning Aske's Monson school takeover plan?

The plan to turn Monson primary into the 'feeder school' for Haberdashers' Aske's Academy was opposed by a clear majority of local primary schools and parents in last autumn's consultation. Who supported Chris and Ian's motion at the November council meeting for the plan to be put on hold until a thorough public inquiry has been held?

Where did your councillors stand?

	Socialist	New Labour	Lib Dem	Tory	Green
For a new school... & save Ladywell pool?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Supporting tenants' & leaseholders right to vote?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Defending the NHS?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Opposed £3.44m cuts to council services?	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No*
Curbing councillors' allowances?	Yes	No	No	No	No
Questioning Aske's Monson takeover plan?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Democracy for the 'Lewisham Homes' ALMO?	Yes	No	No	No	No
Protecting adult social care services?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Opposing rent and charges hikes?	Yes	No	No	No	No

* The Greens split on this vote, giving New Labour a majority for their cuts.

Democracy for the Lewisham Homes ALMO

In November, after it was clear that New Labour was pushing ahead to set up the Lewisham Homes ALMO, Ian and Chris moved a motion for the five so-called 'independent' business representatives on the ALMO board to be elected by Lewisham's tenants and leaseholders. Did anyone else think democracy was a good idea?

Protecting adult care services?

In March the council set its budget for 2006-07. Spending on adult social care was cut, and plans proposed to increase care charges and reduce access to services. Who voted to protect the vulnerable elderly, people with disabilities, and their carers?

Opposing rent & charges hikes?

The March meeting also voted for double-inflation rent rises for council tenants, while cutting housing services, and for new 'lumber charges' which will encourage fly-tipping - even though all the council's tenants' consultation meetings opposed the plans. Who listened to what tenants and leaseholders said?

The special schools consultation

What is the council consulting about?

The council wants more children with special needs to be taught in mainstream schools instead of special schools. Meadowgate school on Revelon Road will move to Downham to become part of a new school for children with complex needs. But many children with less severe needs will no longer be placed in special schools like Pendragon and Brent Knoll.

Isn't it right for children to be taught in the same environment?

Yes, if the funding is in place to properly meet every child's needs. All young people can benefit by learning alongside pupils with different abilities and needs. But it requires significant investment to provide additional teachers, specialist support, smaller classes, equipment and training. Without it, 'inclusion' is an empty phrase that puts demands on schools that they cannot meet and leaves children without the support they need.

But won't schools have the specialist resources?

I don't think they'll be nearly enough. Staff are already under enormous pressure. I fear the promised mainstream 'resource bases' will be insufficient for the numbers and range of needs that they will now be expected to support.

Are the council listening to these concerns?

The council have a responsibility to prove their proposals will work. Instead, it seems they just want to impose them. Their consultation leaflet glosses over the real issues. I suspect they have already made a commitment to the government to introduce changes, in return for the promise of funding to rebuild secondary schools. But what about the funds for teachers and reduced class sizes?

What should parents do?

New Labour's Mayor and cabinet have to be made to realise that they can't just keep ignoring public views. Parents and staff must respond to the consultation. But if Lewisham New Labour try and impose yet another unpopular and damaging initiative, parents and staff will need to organise a united campaign to defend education for all in Lewisham.



Martin Powell-Davies, secretary of the Lewisham Association of the National Union of Teachers, speaking in a personal capacity, explains his concerns about the council's plans.

Nurses before bombs!

LEWISHAM COUNCIL became the first local authority to oppose the government's planned replacement of the Trident submarine nuclear weapons system - after a motion moved by Ian Page and Chris Flood.

The Socialist Party councillors' motion argued "that the £20 billion earmarked for a Trident replacement, plus the annual running costs of £1.6-£1.9 billion, would be better spent on improved public services". It called on Lewisham's three Labour MPs to vote against replacing Trident.



Ian Page on a recent Save Our NHS demo

Opening the debate, Ian Page contrasted the cost of Trident over its 30-year life span with the estimated resources needed to meet the Stern Report's target of cutting Britain's carbon emissions from 150m tonnes to 60m by 2030. Both figures come in at around £76bn - but a new nuclear weapons system won't stop global warming! Ian also pointed out that the money New Labour plans to waste on Trident could pay for 120,000 nurses every year for the next ten years!

Some councillors backed Trident. "Who knows what the world will be like in 30 years time?", one asked rhetorically. But we know something about the future. The Stern Report predicts that if global warming hasn't been contained, in 30 years time there inevitably will be intense conflicts for resources in the ecologically ravished world that will exist then. If society is still organised as it is today, on a capitalist basis divided into competing nations, the prospects for humanity will be bleak indeed - whether Britain has nuclear weapons or not.

The Green councillors backed the motion, the Tories opposed it. The Liberal Democrat and New Labour councillors were split, but enough from both groups ensured the motion was passed.

A vote in one council chamber won't change Blair's policy on Trident. But it shows on a small scale what impact a new, mass voice for working class people in Britain, a new workers' party as an alternative to New Labour, could have in shaping the political debate.

Ian and Chris are among the 2,500 signatories of a declaration in favour of a new workers' party. For more information, check out the Campaign for a New Workers' Party website at www.cnwp.org.uk

Somerville re-development

THE SOMERVILLE Adventure Playground is being rebuilt with funds provided by the New Deal for New Cross (NDC). This is good news for residents particularly since a recent meeting between residents and playground staff with the NDC ironed out concerns over safety and the issue of children leaving the playground to go onto the estate. It was also good news that the ballpark was to remain on the site.

But the very next day after the meeting the NDC hinted at the possibility of demolishing the Barnes Wallis community centre, nursery and shops... and rebuilding them on the ballpark site! No mention is made by the NDC of what will be built on the demolished areas. Who is the NDC doing deals with over that site? And all this after the Somerville Tenants and Residents Association voted unanimously against losing the ballpark!

Socialist councillor Ian Page immediately contacted the NDC and a meeting with ward councillors has been agreed to discuss any such proposals and ensure there is full consultation. The NDC is not there to re-arrange the estate for its own purposes and it should be the residents' choice over whether they want this 're-development'.

Your Socialist councillors will hold the NDC to account and work with residents to ensure that any further re-development is led by the residents and only happens if they want it.