

IN PARLIAMENT  
HOUSE OF COMMONS  
SESSION 2005-06

**CROSSRAIL BILL**

Against-on Merits –Praying to be heard by Counsel, &c.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled.

**THE HUMBLE PETITION of Poplar Dock Boat Users' Association.**

SHEWETH as follows:-

“A Bill to make provision for a railway transport system running from Maidenhead, in the County of Berkshire, and Heathrow Airport, in the London Borough of Hillingdon, through central London to Sheffield, in the County of Essex, and Abbey Wood, in the London Borough of Greenwich; and for connected purposes.”

The Bill is promoted by Mr Secretary Darling.

- 1 Your Petitioner, Margaret O'Donovan represents 120 boat users who are members of Poplar Dock Boat Users' Association and have boats that reside in both Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin, East London.
- 2 Your Petitioner objects to clauses concerning the building of Crossrail Isle of Dogs station. This would result in the “displacement of boats from Poplar Basin and Blackwall Basin” *ref 1- [Crossrail Non Technical Summary 'Community Resources']*, or landlock the boats of Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin for at least five years during the construction of a watertight temporary structure know as a cofferdam within West India Quay, North Dock on the Isle of Dogs. During the period of station construction, access for vessels wanting to enter Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock will be obstructed by the Crossrail construction work. “Locking boats into the Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin for a period of five years would raise concerns about water quality, amenity, and access for maintenance as all boats need to leave the dock for repairs. British Waterways is also concerned about the navigability of the North Dock post construction works, particularly around the shaft on the east side of the Dock” *ref 2- [Crossrail Technical Report 'Assessment of Community Impacts']*.

3 Your Petitioner's objections fall under the following categories

**3.1 Environmental/ecological impact/health and safety**

***Ref 2 - "Locking boats into the Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin for a period of five years would raise concerns about water quality, amenity, and access for maintenance as all boats need to leave the dock for repairs."***

3.1.1 The present Crossrail plans for construction of the cofferdam along the southern side of Poplar North Dock will prevent boats from accessing Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock from the River Thames. This will seal off Bellmouth Passage, the only navigable route for boaters in Poplar and Blackwall Basins to gain access to the River Thames. The presented plans for situation of the cofferdam will landlock the boats for 5 years, the duration of the construction and close any free flow of water, resulting in stagnant water in both Poplar and Blackwall Basins which will have a direct impact on the well being of its human and animal inhabitants.

3.1.2 Poplar Dock is used by fish for breeding, since it contains the only shallow water in the West India Dock system (8.14.54, Impacts on Ecology\*3). The open water of the docks and basins, together with some of their surrounding land, fall within sites of borough importance (8.14.55, Impacts on Ecology\*3). The docks are in part designated for their use by wintering birds, n particular the lesser black-backed gull and herring gull have breeding populations of county significance ref 3- [8.14.55, Impacts on Ecology]. In terms of microbiological parameters the water in the Blackwall Basin and Poplar Dock is of a higher quality than water in both the Thames and the West India Dock.

**3.2 Social impact**

***"Poplar Dock has 90 berths, mostly for recreational use. Blackwell Basin has 20 berths for larger vessels. These are all residential. Moorings on Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin have annual licences. Berts are well subscribed and there is a long waiting list of users. There are very few alternative moorings in Central London. Alternatives include South Dock (Rotherhithe), St Katherine's dock, Shadwell Basin and Limehouse Basin." Ref 2. However all of these sites are considerably oversubscribed. The waiting list for Limehouse goes back as far as 1999.***

3.2.1 120 boats will be affected, directly impacting on the lives of over 300 people. As the Crossrail environmental statement recognises, there is extremely limited availability and sustainability in terms of alternative moorings site. However it does not also recognise the importance role that these moorings play in providing affordable housing (boats) for a strong, diverse community. In other parts of the bill, where residents are to loose their homes or properties, alternative locations or compensation appear to

be suggested. However, this has not been so in the case of Poplar and Blackwall Docks, despite this vibrant community comprising of the following key workers (many of which work within the borough of Tower Hamlets and Greater London):

- 3.2.2 Charity and volunteer workers; NHS doctors and nurses / managers; teachers; Art workers; musicians; designers, legal/city professionals, self employed workers, clerical workers, manual workers, including plumbers, carpenters and electricians.
- 3.2.3 Boaters in Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin are a range of disabled and able bodied people of all ages, and the marina is also comprised of a number of families.
- 3.2.4 Crossrail will have a great impact on a thriving community that will have to be displaced and split up due to the health and safety implications of Crossrail. Article 8 of the Human Rights Act 1998 refers to the Right to Respect for Private and Family Life: "*Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence*". The Crossrail construction environmental issues imposed from the plans for the current location for construction of the cofferdam will result in boats left to lie in stagnant water. This community impact could be deemed a breach of this article because such an impact affects both a person's private life and home.

### 3.3 *Economy*

- 3.3.1 Since Queen Elizabeth II officially opened the Poplar Dock marina in March 1999 the population has made a significant contribution towards the economy of local businesses. For example local shops in and around Poplar High Street, fuel and gas suppliers, public houses and restaurants in the Isle of Dogs. The Petitioners have also made an important contribution to supporting water-based trades people such as floating fuel suppliers. As a socially responsible community we have been instrumental in the setting up of recycling points in and around the marina.

### 3.4 *Aesthetic/Historic landmark*

- 3.4.1 Queen Elizabeth II took time to open this marina because she recognised that this marina has a strong boating tradition. There are many traditional boats moored in Poplar Dock including several Humber Keel barges and a Dutch boat of over 100 years. Despite the many modern buildings in the area, the historic docks remain fundamental to the character of this part of East London. The significance of Docklands to the country's industrial history is reflected in the Grade I listing of the Blackwall Basin wall. The basin of Poplar Dock is grade II listed.

- 3.4.2 The docks, and fundamentally the boats moored therein create a poplar focal point for local residents. Poplar and Blackwall basins are utilised on a daily basis by young and old from the area, both as a popular outdoor meeting point and for recreational activities such as walking, running and fishing. Within Poplar there are few accessible outdoor areas that allow for affordable, healthy activities of this kind. The creation of a stagnant area of water, devoid of boats would have a fundamental impact on the use of the area and in turn, on the health of residents locally.
- 3.4.3 Your Petitioners have not received any information or consultation about the direct impact of the Crossrail bill with anybody from either Crossrail or British Waterways (both government funded). Within the Environmental Impact Assessment it is recognised that the construction of the cofferdam is listed as significant, and yet no alternative suggestions have been included in the document. The Petitioners are concerned that without consultation, the impact of the Crossrail station construction on boat dwellers within the docks will not be considered.
- 3.4.4 Your Petitioner is keen to make it clear that we support Crossrail in concept but we wish to ensure that the construction schedule is more sympathetic to the ecology of Poplar and Blackwall Docks and boat users residing therein to ensure that this diverse and locally important community is not lost.
- 3.5 There are other clauses and provisions of the Bill which, if passed into law as they now stand will prejudicially affect your Petitioners and their rights, interests and property and for which no adequate provision is made to protect your Petitioners.

#### **4 Potential Solutions**

- 4.1 Your Petitioner understands that Crossrail would offer a much needed form of transport for London and welcomes this new route across our city. Your Petitioner proposes four potential solutions to your Petitioner's opposition of the Bill:
- 4.1.1 ***"The redevelopment of Wood Wharf may include the provision of a new canal that would re-route access to Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin, circumventing the need for access via the North Dock. However, it is unlikely that this development will be completed by the time that Crossrail construction works commence. The development of Wood Wharf is anticipated to commence in 2007/8 and it is unlikely that the canal infrastructure would be completed before 2010."*ref 2**
- 4.1.2 ***Solution 1*** - Your Petitioner would require a navigable alternative route through to the Thames for all vessels from Poplar Dock and Blackwall

Basin to be in place before the Crossrail construction begins. The development of the new Wood Wharf canal would ensure this is possible and we would therefore suggest that construction of the Isle of Dogs station should therefore be scheduled to reflect this.

- 4.1.3 **Solution 2** - Your Petitioner would consider/accept an alternative relocation of boats that currently reside at Poplar Dock and Blackwall Basin to Millwall Dock. British Waterways has in the past undertaken a feasibility study in respect of construction of a dock at Millwall.
- 4.1.4 **Solution 3** - Your Petitioner would like to be offered alternative mooring spaces for the duration of the construction period in Central London. The alternative moorings previously listed are all over subscribed. A new marina would need to be established.
- 4.1.5 **Solution 4** - Financial compensation for loss of a boat as a sellable asset whilst land locked/financial compensation for relocation of boats if your Petitioner remains responsible for re- location.

YOUR PETITIONER therefore humbly prays your Honourable House that the Bill may not be allowed to pass into law as it now stands and that they may be heard by their Counsel, Agents and witnesses in support of the allegations of this Petition against either if objection is made to the principle of the Bill, "the Preamble and against such of the clauses and provisions of the Bill as effect"; or if only clauses of the Bill are objected to, "so much of the Bill as affects" the property, rights and interests of your Petitioners and in support of such other clauses and provisions as may be necessary or expedient for their protection, or that such other relief may be given to your Petitioner in the premises as your Honourable House shall deem meet.

AND your Petitioners will ever pray, &c.

Lucie Stephens  
Agent for the above named Petitioner, Margaret O'Donovan, Secretary to Poplar Dock Boat User's Association.