

## Mayor defends cable car hit by unwelcome gusts



Boris Johnson: Line “doing brilliantly” Times photographer, David Bebber

Michael Savage and Soraya Kishwari  
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So few passengers use the £60 million Thames cable car backed by Boris Johnson that it lost £50,000 in a week, a critic claims.

Because of falling demand and stoppages for high winds, weekly traffic on Emirates Air Line, from North Greenwich to Royal Docks, dropped below 15,000 in the week to February 2, its lowest so far, according to figures released under the Freedom of Information Act. With costs of £115,000 a week, this means a loss of £50,000 even if every passenger paid the top fare of £4.30, according to figures obtained by Alan Haughton, who opposed the line.

The crossing costs about £115,000 a week to run, according to figures obtained by East London resident Alan Haughton, a campaigner opposing the cable car. He said that even if every passenger paid the maximum fare of £4.30, the line would still have made a £50,000 loss during its worst week.

In its best week, in November, the line, opened in June last year, carried 70,704 people, and Transport for London said it was “ahead of forecasts”.

Yesterday, Mr Johnson said the line was “doing brilliantly” and blamed the recent low numbers on “bad wind”. The Mayor added: “It’s not running at a loss.

“They said the Victoria Line would be empty and the [Docklands Light Railway]. Give it time. We are absolutely confident that we will continue to fill it and urge you to go on it. The cable car was sponsored to the tune of £36 million. No form of public transport in London covers its daily running costs. It’s doing brilliantly.

“You have to stop it when there’s bad wind,” he said. “We had huge numbers in the summer. It’s not running at a loss.”

Emirates said the target for the first year had been 1.3 million journeys and there had been 1.8 million so far.

Danny Price, the head of the Emirates Air Line, said: the cable car was “a remarkably low-cost option for providing a new and much-needed river crossing in East London”.

Val Shawcross, Labour’s transport spokeswoman in the London Assembly, said commuters would have found alternative types of crossing more useful. “The cable car has really become a tourist attraction,” she said. “I’m not sure this scheme would have passed any kind of real analysis of the costs and benefits.”

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**David Crow**

11 days ago

I watched from my balcony the cable car being built and there is no nimbyism in my response to it. But I was informed that it had a commuter role to play as well as being a tourist attraction. I asked myself what commuter would want to pay for an extra expensive stage to get to work involving more time and what could be a wet walk to the DLR station on the other side of the Thames. Sure the views are marvellous, but that is not going to bring many people back for a second look. As for a link between the O2 and the Exell centre, it would be a rare combination of events that would draw anyone to these two on the same day.

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**allen westgate**

11 days ago

I haven't been on it yet - but reading this inspires me to go on it - i'm sure with spring / summer coming it'll attract a lot of tourist attention and will end up making money. they said this about the wheel and 13 years later it is still going strong. Red Ken v Boris - I'll pick Boris any day.....

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**Andrew Halket**

11 days ago

So what is Alan Haughton's problem with the cable car?  
Is he just a nimby for nimbyism's sake?

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**daniel case**

11 days ago

Forget the left wing morons Boris, they haven't a clue, you only have to look what they did to the UK economy, just to satisfied their trade union master's to know how clever that lot are. Totally brainless the whole lot of them.

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**Mr Colin King**

11 days ago

'No form of public transport in London covers its daily running costs.' Did they mention that at the outset?

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**Samuel McKinney**

11 days ago

**@Mr Colin King** Affordability or margin ? If public transport was to cover itself, it would be limited and everyone would be walking. What do you expect ?

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**Leonie Purvis**

11 days ago

It is a fabulous new way to cross the Thames and I urge everyone to go on it. The view is amazing. Build more of them Boris!

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**Lester May**

11 days ago

**@Leonie Purvis** - I agree (NZ Leonie?) - the London cable car is brilliant. I had a return journey on the thing last month and, despite my vertigo, all was fine and fun! All one needs is a clear day and not too much wind. It's extraordinary to think that, as one sees from the air the mouth of Bow Creek that, there until 1912, was the site of Thames Ironworks, a shipbuilder; the battleship HMS Thunderer was launched there in 1911 - what a fantastic sight that would have been from the cable car!

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**Leonie Purvis**

11 days ago

**@Lester May**

Yes Lester - NZ Leonie of Cable London fame! I also rode it despite my vertigo and would not have missed it for the world. I can highly recommend a ride across just as the sun sets, what a truly wonderful sight to see London spread out before you as the sun goes down.

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**Lester May**

7 days ago

@Leonie Purvis - the Times Comments Gestapo did not allow my last comment, Leonie. Do get in touch - ten years is a long time!

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**Mr M Owens**

11 days ago

I think the cable car is a superb addition to London's river crossings and to our ability to see the city in a new light. Inspired!

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**john bowes**

11 days ago

Why would you campaign against it? Any new infrastructure is helpful.

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**Samuel McKinney**

11 days ago

@john bowes There are always small minded people.....

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