

# SARDINE MAN SENT TO SPY ON PACKED TRAINS

3457  
**SARDINE Man could be slipping into a packed train carriage near you.**

Rail watchdog Transport 2000 has sent out its spy dressed as a giant fish to the 10 most overcrowded trains in the country - including the 4.33pm from Sutton to Luton.

The train, which regularly carries 50 per cent more passengers than it has room for, stops at Elephant & Castle, Loughborough Junction, Herne Hill, Tulse Hill and Streatham.

Transport 2000's Julia Thomas said a lot of the problems were caused because the firms running the franchises signed up for only short contracts which did not encourage them to invest in the services.

She said Sardine Man, *pictured*

**By ROBERT DEX**

*right*, would gather evidence about overcrowding which would be sent to Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander.

Lib Dem candidate for Streatham Hill Chris Nicholson said: "I use that route. I know exactly what Transport 2000 mean.

"It is dreadful. Often the trains are shortened to just four carriages making overcrowding far worse and the reliability of the trains is appalling.

"But it is not just this line where this is a problem.

"The Streatham Common to Victoria route is just as bad."

A spokesman for First Capital Connect, which runs the Sutton to

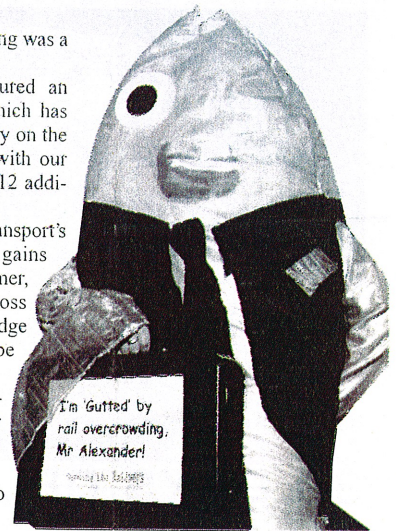
Luton train, said overcrowding was a major challenge.

He said: "We have secured an additional four-car train, which has marginally increased capacity on the route and we are working with our industry partners to release 12 additional trains.

"If the Department for Transport's Thameslink Programme gains funding sign-off this summer, the north-south route across London between London Bridge and King's Cross will be upgraded.

"As part of this programme, brand new 12-car trains will be introduced on the Thameslink route."

For more information go to [www.sardineman.org.uk](http://www.sardineman.org.uk)



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## Train squashes in one more sardine – just

3451  
IF you have ever been crammed into an overcrowded train you will have sympathy for Sardine Man.

A transport group staged a publicity stunt in the North-East yesterday featuring a woman dressed as a giant sardine to highlight the need for Government investment to increase capacity and relieve congestion on the rail network.

Our fishy friend continued her journey on the country's most overcrowded trains by taking a ride on the worst route in the country – the 7.59am Durham to Newcastle service.

The TransPennine Express journey was revealed to be 88% above capacity in a survey by Transport 2000.

The 8am Northern Rail train from Morpeth to Newcastle, at 58% above capacity, was sixth in the list, which was compiled using statistics from bodies including the Department for Transport, Nexus and pressure group Railfuture.

Transport 2000 public trans-



**BIT OF A TIGHT SQUEEZE:** Vanessa Bulkacz – Sardine Man – squeezes into the 7.59.

port campaigner Vanessa Bulkacz, who has been travelling the UK dressed as Sardine Man to illustrate that rail overcrowding is not confined to London and the South-East.

She said: "The Durham to Newcastle service was very

busy. The train arrived late and there were a lot of people standing on the platform."

Transport 2000's campaign is calling on the Government to ensure that increasing the capacity of the rail network is at the centre of the this summer's

new 30-year rail strategy.

Since the statistics were gathered in December it is understood that TransPennine has put an extra carriage on the Durham to Newcastle service.

To read Sardine Man's blog, visit [www.sardineman.org.uk](http://www.sardineman.org.uk)