

“Getting the railway opened is our absolute priority” – Mark Wild CEO Crossrail

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“The Coronavirus outbreak and lockdown have caused unprecedented problems for families, business and projects around the world and Crossrail has been no exception.

When the UK’s lockdown was announced in March we were already making plans for a full safe stop of all our construction sites and when we started to come back out of full lockdown, we were quick to start to safely remobilise.

We were still able to get a lot done during this period, with teams working on planning, accreditation and certification remotely, but obviously it has set us back.

There were certainly pressures on the programme before as well but when an already complicated job was hit by the shut-down it meant we lost further time, only some of which can be recovered.

The Elizabeth Line is now in its complex final stages and we are developing a comprehensive plan to complete the railway focused on completing the remaining construction and systems integration followed by intensive operational testing.

The two main elements of that programme are getting the routeway finished and completing the testing, commissioning and handing over of stations to TfL. There is also an extensive assurance and safety case to be finalised and approved.

Following July's Crossrail board we confirmed the plan to open the central section between Paddington and Abbey Wood next summer, as announced earlier this year prior to COVID-19, is not now achievable.

Currently we are working on the detail of the recovery plan and it's our hope that we will shortly be able to provide a more detailed update of what our journey to Trial Running, Trial Operations and the start of passenger services looks like.

But in the meantime, I want to reassure my colleagues in the transport sector that everyone working on the project knows how important it is for us to get the Elizabeth Line completed and for it to act as a living reminder of what the UK rail industry can achieve.

We know that in this time of social distancing the space provided by the Elizabeth Line, both on the new trains and on our platforms and ticket halls, has never been more needed.

Getting the railway opened is our absolute priority and when we do we believe the experience of using the Elizabeth Line will be one which builds confidence in passengers again, as well as exciting and delighting them.

Our focus right now is on completing the remaining infrastructure works so that we can fully test the railway. During August we are undertaking a period of intensive construction activity across the tunnels, portals and shafts to help recover lost time and complete the remaining construction works needed to allow Trial Running to get underway.

And despite the challenges presented by COVID-19, good progress continues to be made with completing the remaining construction works, with much of this work coming to an end along with software testing for the signalling and train systems.

But we know we have some hard yards still ahead of us. In spite of it all though we have a plan to get us through to where we need to be and a product which we are incredibly keen to share with the travelling public, as well as show off to the rail industry.

It may be later than we planned or wanted it to be, but Crossrail is coming."

Mark Wild, CEO, Crossrail

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