

Historic Whitechapel station entrance reopens to customers as the Elizabeth line station transfers to Transport for London

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A new ticket hall and lifts have opened for customers at Whitechapel station as the original entrance on Whitechapel Road has reopened with the addition of step-free access to London Underground and London Overground platforms.

This comes as Whitechapel Elizabeth line station has officially transferred to London Underground (LU) from Crossrail with LU staff now operating the new station facilities. It is the seventh Elizabeth line central section station to transfer to TfL.

The new stations on the transformational Elizabeth line are much larger than many other central London stations due to the length of the new trains, which are more than 200 metres long.

As well as the renovated Victorian entrance from 1876 being cleaned, repaired and opened up to provide more space, local access has been improved with a new public footway directly through the station connecting Whitechapel Road to a new entrance on Durward Street, which does not require passing

through the gateline. The temporary station entrance which has been in use on Court Street since 2016 has now closed and will be removed next year.

The new ticket hall sits within a concourse built on a bridge running above the London Underground and London Overground tracks. At Whitechapel, the London Underground actually passes above the London Overground, so building above both operational railways and the Victorian infrastructure was a significant challenge for Crossrail and its main contractor BBMV (the Balfour Beatty, Morgan Sindall, VINCI Construction joint venture), while also constructing the Elizabeth line below. Thousands of hours were needed to undertake the works, including overnight when services were not in operation and during some essential closures of the network.

New lifts have been installed at the station providing step-free access to the District and Hammersmith & City lines as well as London Overground platforms. The area between the London Underground platforms has been resurfaced and hoardings removed, which has opened up the space on the platforms providing more room for customers to circulate. There are also new benches and help points. New escalators have also been built at the station down to the Elizabeth line, and step-free access from the street to Elizabeth line trains will be available at Whitechapel when it opens in the first half of 2022.

The upgraded, modern ticket hall at Whitechapel is more spacious with a longer gateline, replacing the cramped Victorian ticket hall which was previously used to access the station from Whitechapel Road. There are four new ticket vending machines as well as customer information screens providing a positive customer experience for those using the station.

The glass above the concourse allows daylight into the station and down to the London Overground platforms providing a calm, open atmosphere in a similar design to the new Paddington Elizabeth line station which has also transferred to TfL. The concourse has a distinctive green roof with sedum plants growing on top, providing several environmental benefits including improvements to air quality, water absorption and drainage, noise reduction as well as improving conservation and biodiversity.

Heidi Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport, said: "I'm delighted that the impressive Victorian entrance at Whitechapel station has reopened with a more spacious ticket hall and step-free access. These upgrades will make a real difference to passengers using the station ahead of the opening of the Elizabeth line next year."

Andy Lord, London Underground Managing Director, said: "This really is a stunning station and incorporates a renovated Victorian entrance and a green roof to boost biodiversity. I hope the local community will be as impressed with the station as I am.

"With step-free access to the London Underground and London Overground platforms now available, there are real benefits for customers, particularly those heading to The Royal London Hospital directly across the road.

"London Underground staff have already been getting acquainted with the facilities at the modern station, and as always are happy to help customers returning to the station or using it for the first time. I know when the Elizabeth line opens next year it will provide another vital addition to the local community."

Mark Wild, Crossrail Chief Executive, said: “The whole team at Whitechapel have done a fantastic job weaving between the existing operational transport services to create this incredible new Elizabeth line station which has been one of the most challenging Elizabeth line stations to construct. I am delighted this station has now been handed over to London Underground and I am sure customers will be very impressed when they start using the new station entrance.”

John Biggs, Mayor of Tower Hamlets, said: “I’m delighted that the Whitechapel Elizabeth line station has now been handed over to Transport for London and that the new accessible station will be open for District, Hammersmith & City and Overground passengers ahead of the Elizabeth line also finally opening next year. The new facilities are a big benefit for us, particularly those who will benefit from step-free access, and the new line will add significant extra capacity and faster journeys providing a real gain for residents and a boost to our local economy.”

Steve O’Sullivan, BBMV Project Director, said: “As I reflect on this incredible feat of engineering, I have never been more proud of what our incredible team have delivered. It truly is testament to the collaborative culture of our joint venture, who have persevered throughout the challenges faced by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

“We now look forward to watching as the station plays a role in transforming travel across London, whilst also supporting wider regeneration in the local area through job creation and opportunities for local businesses.”

London has paid for the majority of the new railway and when the line opens, customers will be able to use the new escalators or lifts to access the two Elizabeth line platforms, which are more than 200 metres long. On the platforms there are a series of large-scale collage artworks inspired by the vibrant diversity of the local community in Whitechapel produced by artist Chantal Joffe as part of the Crossrail Art Programme.

The station will offer an interchange between the Elizabeth line, the District and Hammersmith & City lines and London Overground services.

Work to improve the highway and public realm around Whitechapel station will continue in partnership with the London Borough of Tower Hamlets to provide a welcoming environment for pedestrians.

Photo credit: Transport for London