

Queen makes surprise visit to mark Elizabeth line completion

May 17, 2022



The Queen and The Earl of Wessex have visited Paddington Elizabeth line station in order to mark the completion of the new railway before it is opened to the public.

During the visit, Her Majesty unveiled a plaque celebrating the completion of the line named in Her honour. The plaque have a permanent home at Paddington station, celebrating The Queen's connection with the railway.

Accompanied by The Earl of Wessex, The Queen also met with staff who have been key to the Crossrail project, as well as Elizabeth line staff who will be running the railway – including apprentices, drivers, and station staff.

Her Majesty and His Royal Highness were joined on their visit by the Prime Minister Boris Johnson, The Mayor of London Sadiq Khan, Transport for London's Commissioner Andy Byford, the Transport Secretary the Right Hon. Grant Shapps, and the Crossrail Chief Executive Mark Wild.

At Paddington, the line contributes to the transformation of the area and complements the station building

created by Isambard Kingdom Brunel that opened in 1854. London Underground arrived at the station in 1863, with the opening of the original section between Paddington and Farringdon by the Metropolitan Railway.

The Earl also had the chance to travel on the railway from Paddington to Tottenham Court Road.

During construction of the railway, eight giant tunnel boring machines burrowed below the streets of London to create 42km of new rail tunnels which cross the River Thames three times, and more than 3 million tonnes of excavated spoil contributed to the creation of Jubilee Marsh as part of the Wallasea Island Wild Coast project.

The visit was Her Majesty's second to the Elizabeth line. To mark the name change from Crossrail to the Elizabeth line, The Queen came to see the railway during its construction in 2016. Today's visit builds upon a long-held association between the Royal family and London's Transport network. Her Majesty became the first reigning monarch to travel on the London Underground in 1969, when she opened the Victoria line.

The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said: "I'm delighted that Her Majesty The Queen and HRH Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex have officially unveiled the new Elizabeth line station at Paddington today. The opening of the Elizabeth line, with nearly 70 per cent of the total funding paid for by London, is a landmark moment for our capital and our whole country, particularly in this special Platinum Jubilee year.

"The Elizabeth line is the most significant addition to our transport network in decades and this new line will revolutionise travel across the capital and the south east and bring economic benefits to the whole country. There is now just one week to go until our world-class new railway will be open to passengers, and I can't wait for everyone to experience it."

Andy Byford, Transport for London's Commissioner, said: "Her Majesty The Queen has a long association with London's transport network, and I am delighted that Her Majesty was able to visit our magnificent Paddington Elizabeth line station today. In a landmark year for Her Majesty, during the Platinum Jubilee, everyone at TfL is committed to ensuring this new railway will serve as a fitting tribute and will – by creating faster journeys, new jobs, and economic growth – become a vital part of London's recovery.

"What could be better for encouraging back on to public transport, and what better symbol could there be of London's renaissance from the pandemic."

Transport Secretary, Grant Shapps, said: "Boasting the oldest underground network in the world, London has long been viewed as a pioneer in world leading transport systems and the Elizabeth Line is no exception.

"Just one week from now, Londoners will have access to faster and cheaper travel on board these state-of-the-art trains and it's an honour to have played a role in this through the Government's £9bn investment."

Elizabeth line in action

Following its public opening next week, the Elizabeth line will initially operate as three separate railways as always planned. Customers travelling between Reading or Heathrow into London will initially need to change at Paddington for services into the central section of the route, and customers from Shenfield into London will initially need to change at Liverpool Street. Bond Street station will open later this year, when the western and eastern sections of the railway are connected to the central section to enable through-travel.

The Elizabeth line will operate 12 trains per hour between Paddington and Abbey Wood from Monday to Saturday 06:30 to 23:00. Work will continue in engineering hours and on Sundays to allow a series of testing and software updates in preparation for more intensive services from the autumn.

Services from Reading, Heathrow, and Shenfield will connect with the central tunnels in autumn when frequencies will also be increased to 22 trains per hour in the peak between Paddington and Whitechapel. There will be up to 24 trains per hour between Paddington and Whitechapel during the peak when the railway is fully open.

At Paddington, the line contributes to the burgeoning transformation of the area and complements the station building created by Isambard Kingdom Brunel that opened in 1854. London Underground arrived at the station in 1863, with the opening of the original section between Paddington and Farringdon by the Metropolitan Railway. This legacy now continues with the addition of the new cavernous and architecturally stunning Elizabeth line station. During construction of the railway, eight giant tunnel boring machines burrowed below the streets of London to create 42km of new rail tunnels which cross the River Thames three times, and more than 3 million tonnes of excavated spoil contributed to the creation of Jubilee Marsh as part of the Wallasea Island Wild Coast project.