

CROSSRAIL – THE PICTURE COMPLETED

Sunday 21 May 2023 marked the completion of Crossrail as envisaged, with some through trains from the Shenfield route working through to the western suburbs for the first time on a regular basis. The service also achieves the 24 trains per hour planned for through the central area between Paddington and Whitechapel at rush hours, instead of the previous 22 trains per hour. The off-peak and weekend services remain at 16 trains per hour.

But in the new timetable, the extension of trains from the Shenfield line beyond Paddington equates to only two trains per hour, with all others still terminating at Paddington, where “auto reverse” is in operation. (This is where the train reverses on its own automatically, saving the driver walking through the train while the train is stationary in the reversing siding).

It is claimed that this timetable completes the Elizabeth Line ‘as planned’, but did this really envisage just two trains per hour from the Shenfield route out to the west? However, the fact that Heathrow T5 only has a 30-minute EL service (to and from Shenfield) is due to the fact that it is complemented by a 15-minute Heathrow Express service, providing six trains per hour overall.

When the railway first opened between Paddington and Abbey Wood on 24 May 2022, a 5-minute end-to-end service was provided between 06.30 and 23.00 on Mondays to Saturdays, with the morning start advanced to be an hour earlier to 05.30 from 5 September.

Only when the next stage opened on 6 November 2022 did services operate throughout each day of the week, although some early morning and late night trains continued to serve the high level stations at Paddington and Liverpool Street, the latter also having a limited half hourly service in the peaks. In the new timetable, the principles are very similar but with more trains (at half-hourly intervals) between Gidea Park and Liverpool Street high level in each peaks, six as against two in both. In both timetables, these trains operated empty in the counterflow peak direction.

The new timetable also claims to reduce the amount of ‘stand time’ on many trains approaching and departing west of Paddington for trains slotting into their ‘path’.

First and last trains through the central area are similar to hitherto, varying by only one or two minutes. There remains a number of trains to and from both high level stations at the extremes of each day when the central area is closed, more so on Sundays.

PADDINGTON PLATFORMS 11-12

	MF EARLY	MF LATE	SAT EARLY	SAT LATE	SUN EARLY	SUN LATE
Arrivals	–	5	–	5	11	14
Departures	11	–	9	–	22	6

LIVERPOOL STREET PLATFORMS 15-17

	MF EARLY	MF LATE	SAT EARLY	SAT LATE	SUN EARLY	SUN LATE
Arrivals	2	1	2	1	6	8
Departures	3	1	3	1	6	8

SERVICE INTERVALS

	Until 20 May 2023			From 21 May 2023		
	Peaks	Midday	Sat/Sun	Peaks	Midday	Sat/Sun
Shenfield – Whitechapel ‡	4-8	7-8	7-8	4-6	7-8	7-8
Abbey Wood – Whitechapel	6	7-8	7-8	5	7-8	7-8
Whitechapel – Paddington	2-3	3-4	3-4	2½	3-4	3-4
Paddington – Hayes & Harlington *	4-11	4-11	4-11	5-8	3-10	3-9
Hayes & Harlington – Maidenhead †	4-14	9-21	12-18	7-14	12-18	12-18
M Maidenhead – Reading	12-16	30	30	10-20	30	30
Hayes & Harlington – Heathrow T2&3	15	15	15	4-15	4-15	4-15
Heathrow T2 & 3 to Heathrow T4	30	30	30	15	15	15
Heathrow T2 & 3 to Heathrow T5 §	30	30	30	30	30	30

§ Heathrow T2 & 3 to Heathrow T5 is supplemented by 4 Heathrow Express trains per hour.

* Southall, Hanwell, West Ealing and Acton Main Line have less frequent services.

† Taplow and Iver have less frequent services.

‡ Additional 30-minute peak service Gidea Park – Liverpool Street High Level in peak direction.

TRAINS IN SERVICE

		UNTIL 20 MAY 2023	FROM 21 MAY 2023
Monday to Friday	Peaks	57	62
Monday to Friday	Midday	45	51
Saturdays	Daytime busy	46	50
Sundays	Daytime busy	45	48

With concerns now being aired that HS2 may be delayed reaching Euston, with Old Oak Common being a temporary terminus until it does (or perhaps 'if it does), we are hearing that extra

trains for the Elizabeth Line might be required to soak up all those passengers arriving from the north (or those from Birmingham at least!). Whether that will be realised or not remains to be seen, but trains could be lengthened to 11 coaches because all of the Crossrail Underground stations have been built for such. Whether the open-air stations are long enough remains to be seen. A short-term solution which might help a little is the extension of the Paddington reversers to Old Oak. Based on the current timetable (May 2023) there are 14 reversers at Paddington per hour in the peaks and 6 per hour during the off-peaks. That number of trains starting from Old Oak Common would go some way to provide empty trains from the HS2 hoards (that are expected!), and not totally saturating those trains already with passengers coming from the west. We await developments ...

CROSSRAIL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY

STAGE	DATE	DETAIL
1	22.06.17	7-car class 345 trains in service Shenfield – Liverpool Street (high level) on a limited basis.
2A	20.05.18	Paddington (high level) – Hayes & Harlington using 7-car class 345 Stock. Paddington (high level) – Heathrow operated by TfL Rail with existing class 360 Stock.
	29.07.19	Paddington (high level) – Hayes & Harlington using 9-car class 345 Stock (limited service). Full 9-car service from 09.03.20.
5A	15.12.19	Paddington (high level) – Reading local services by TfL Rail vice GWR. 'Soft' introduction with limited service of 7-car trains from 25.11.19. Some 9-cars to Reading from 23.03.20. All 9-cars to Reading by 29.04.20. 9-car operation withdrawn 11.06.20 because of software fault and 7-cars in place. 9-car operation reinstated 22.12.20, but three 7-cars to remain until stage 5B begins because of shorter platform at Paddington High Level. Three remaining 7-cars converted to 9-cars by 30.11.22.
2B	30.07.20	Paddington (high level) – Heathrow T5 using 9-car class 345 Stock (previously estimated end-March 2020). Class 360s withdrawn after traffic 13.09.20.
–	29.12.20	Refurbished class 387 EMUs take over on Heathrow Express service. Class 332 EMUs withdrawn and transferred.
4A	26.05.21	9-car class 345s Liverpool Street (high level) – Shenfield. Full service of 9-car trains 'east' September 2021).
3	24.05.22	Paddington (low level) – Abbey Wood opened (originally planned for December 2018) except for Bond Street which remains closed. Operates 06.30 to c.23.00 Mondays to Saturdays only. Opened from 05.30 from 05.09.22 Mondays to Saturdays only. TfL Rail officially becomes Elizabeth Line.
–	24.10.22	Bond Street Crossrail station opens.
4	06.11.22	Shenfield – Whitechapel connected with through services to Paddington.
5B	06.11.22	Western services connected via Paddington (low level) to Abbey Wood and eastern services from Shenfield via Liverpool Street (low level) to Paddington. Services operate throughout each day in normal traffic hours. Some services at extremes of the traffic day operate into Paddington (high level) and Liverpool Street (high level). Two services in each peak Gidea Park – Liverpool Street high level. Empty in counterflow peak direction.
–	23.05.23	Complete east-west Crossrail services 'as originally planned' (q.v.), to and from both routes. Six services in each peak Gidea Park – Liverpool Street high level. Empty in counterflow peak direction. Some services at extremes of the traffic day continue to operate at Paddington (high level – west) and Liverpool Street (high level – east).