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ZERO HOUR FOR KING'S CROSS AS TRANSPORT SECRETARY OPENS NEW PLATFORM 0

Network Rail's redevelopment of King's Cross station reached another crucial milestone today with the official opening of Platform 0 by Transport Secretary Philip Hammond.

The addition of the new platform means Network Rail can begin refurbishing the station's existing platforms, which will be taken out of service on a rolling basis, without affecting services.

Built on what was for many years a taxi rank at the eastern side of the station, Platform 0 will provide greater capacity for passengers and trains at King's Cross once the station redevelopment is complete.

Transport Secretary Philip Hammond said: "This new platform is just one part of a project that will transform this station, benefiting the thousands of passengers who use it each day. King's Cross is one of our key railway hubs and it's vital it works better, looks better and leaves a good impression on the people who pass through it – including those anticipated during the 2012 Olympics."

Ian Fry, King's Cross programme director for Network Rail, said: "King's Cross is being transformed into a world class transport hub which can meet future demand and offer the best facilities for passengers. The new platform will allow even more trains to run, provide more space and means we can keep train services fully operational throughout the redevelopment."

Elaine Holt, chairman of East Coast and chief executive of Directly Operated Railways, said: "We are delighted to mark the opening of Platform 0 today with the departure of the first East Coast train from this new part of the station. The new platform will help us to continue to run services normally during the redevelopment of the station which, when complete, will provide customers with extra trains, better connections and a more pleasant travelling experience."

Neal Lawson, managing director of train operator First Capital Connect, said: "This new platform is a crucial step in the redevelopment of King's Cross station that means we can run all our normal services during the building work and, by the time of the Olympics, have more platform space for extra services in the future. That can only be good news for our customers."

With passenger numbers at King's Cross expected to rise to over 50m a year within a decade – and not forgetting the additional influx of visitors for the 2012 Olympic Games – the extra capacity provided by the new platform will help the station meet growing passenger demand.

The most significant part of the redevelopment is the new western concourse, due for completion in time for the Olympics, which will be three-times the size of the current single-storey concourse. Passengers will benefit from more shops and restaurants, better seating areas to use while waiting for trains and improved links to St Pancras International and the Underground.

After the Olympics the current concourse will be demolished, allowing Network Rail to restore the grade 1 listed station façade to its former glory and create a stunning open piazza larger than Leicester Square at the front of the station. Leading London architects Stanton Williams were recently appointed by Network Rail to work with them on the design of the new public square.

About Network Rail

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Network Rail is the 'not for dividend' owner and operator of Britain's railway infrastructure, which includes the tracks, signals, tunnels, bridges, viaducts, level crossings and stations - the largest of which we also manage. We aim to provide a safe, reliable and efficient rail infrastructure for freight and passenger trains to use. Our website: www.networkrail.co.uk

Notes To Editors

About Network Rail's £500m King's Cross redevelopment:

- The majority of the station redevelopment will be completed by 2012 in time for the Olympics. The new public square will be completed in 2013.
- Once completed, 50m passengers will use the new station each year – 10m more than today. An additional platform, increasing reliability and capacity at the station will be built
- The new station will include integrated transport links with international and domestic services from St Pancras and the London Underground
- The Grade 1 listed façade will be restored to its former glory by demolishing the current single-storey extension to the station

A new open piazza in front of the station, larger than Leicester Square, will be created

Benefits to the local community:

- Network Rail's project has included £1m for London Borough of Camden to spend on improvements to the local area, including £750,000 to improve the pedestrian environment along York Way.
- As well as redeveloping the station itself, Network Rail will spend over £6m to create a major new public piazza space outside the southern end of the station which will be larger than Leicester Square.
- The equivalent of almost 400 jobs will be created as a result of this work and Network Rail is working with surrounding local authorities to support training and employment for people in the local community.

- Network Rail has also pledged to provide £175,000 to increase the number of covered cycle racks for the station. This will help to provide 800 more spaces for bike parking in the King's Cross Central site in time for the Olympics.

- King's Cross has been identified by the Mayor's London Plan as an area of potential growth. Network Rail is working closely with local authorities and neighbouring developers (London and Continental Railways, and Argent plc) so that plans for the station support this wider development. Network Rail will also support a number of local community groups throughout this project.

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