

London calling: keep Crossrail running with TfL



It's one of the largest, most exciting engineering projects in the history of London: a railway line over 100 kilometres long, running underneath the heart of the city and out into the Home Counties. Needless to say, the Crossrail project will change the face of the capital forever.

With the central section of the Elizabeth line between Paddington and central London due to open in December 2018, Transport for London (TfL) is on the hunt for talented people to help maintain the line.

PROCAT has joined forces with TfL to offer the chance to get involved in this landmark project by completing a paid maintenance apprenticeship at the college.

Karisma Henry, 28, and Pete Cotton, 34, have recently started their two-year TfL apprenticeships and are working towards a Level 3 NVQ, BTEC and a job working on one of the largest public transport systems in the world.

However, both students applied for the apprenticeship after doing other things first. "I did go to university to do a degree and stuff, but what I really wanted to do was something hands-on. When I was younger I wanted to be a mechanic," explained

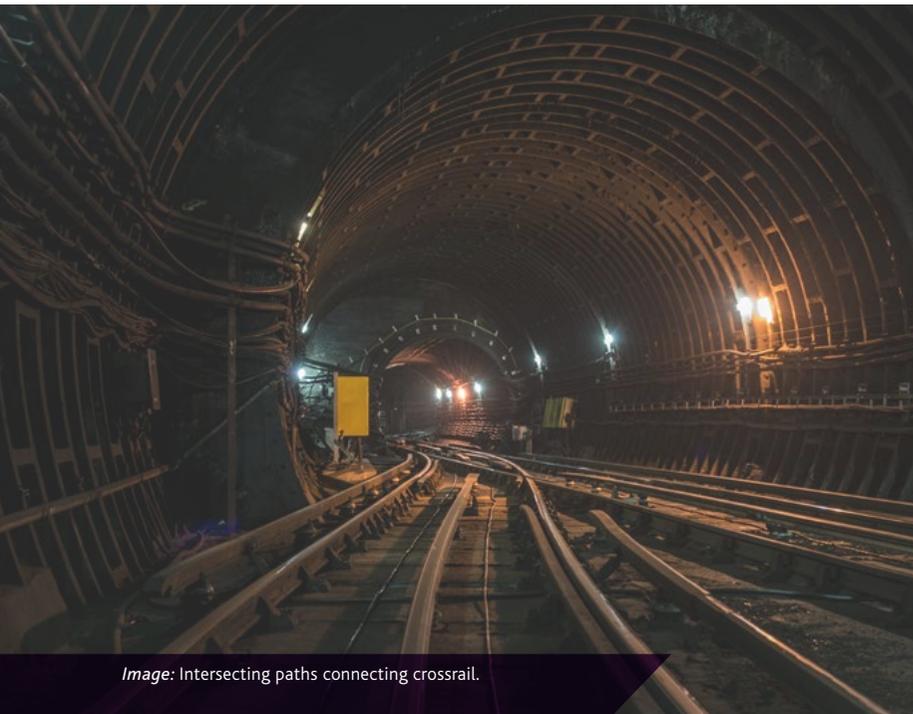


Image: Intersecting paths connecting crossrail.

Karisma. "I should have done an apprenticeship a long time ago, rather than going to university. I did waste a bit of time."

Pete on the other hand, found himself stuck in a bit of a rut: "I spent quite a number of years doing a rather boring office job, and I just fancied a total career change," he said. "I'd always been interested in trains and things since I was a child. So I just thought I'd give it a go and it's been really good so far."

Another factor was his partner relocating to London, which he used "as a catalyst to find something that he actually enjoyed and wanted to do, rather than just get out of bed every morning to earn money".

Both students are surprised at how much they've learnt in just a few months at PROCAT. "I never knew anything about train tracks, trains or engineering- so I've learnt a lot in four weeks," said Karisma. "From where I started to where I am now is completely different. It's pretty amazing."

Pete also has advice for teenagers who are deciding between going down the traditional academic route and applying for university or undertaking a hands-on apprenticeship: "Apprenticeships offer you a number of skills, and you can earn as you're doing it, rather than running up a massive debt."

So what does the immediate future hold for Karisma and Pete? "I'm looking forward to going out and actually doing placements, trying to put the work that we're doing here into practice and seeing what I've learned and how it's affecting things," said Karisma.

Pete is similarly upbeat about the varied experiences the apprenticeship offers: "TfL's a very large and varied organisation, and there are lots of different places they're going to send us on the placement, so I just want to try everything really."