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NETWORK RAIL has confirmed that the western concourse at London King's Cross, which is part of a £400m development, will open next month. The company has also announced the names of the retailers who will open units there. Network Rail said the opening, on 19 March, would mark 'a major milestone' in the redevelopment of the station.

The project began in 2007 and is set to be completed next year, after the 'temporary' 1970s concourse at the front of the station is removed and replaced by a new 7,000 square metre public piazza. The demolition of the old concourse will also reveal the original nineteenth century front of the station, which opened in 1854.

King's Cross programme director Ian Fry said: "On the outside passengers have seen King's Cross station transforming before their eyes for the last five years. We have been working hard behind the scenes to create a blend of old and new architecture with a strong mix of facilities worthy of the new-look station.

"Research tells us that passengers consistently rate high-quality facilities alongside convenient retail and catering as important station priorities. The new concourse at King's Cross is designed to provide those facilities which will make journeys easier for passengers as well as appealing to those who like to combine their travel with a bit of shopping, eating or drinking."

Network Rail added that congestion at King's Cross 'will be significantly reduced' following the introduction of a one-way system which will direct passengers to enter the station via the new concourse and leave it via the existing one at the front.

The retailers who will be trading within the new concourse will include Accessorize, Caffè Nero, Boots, M&S Simply Food, Paperchase, Pret A Manger, T M Lewin and W H Smith. Other arrivals are newcomers to station trading in Britain, such as Benito's Hat, American Apparel, Fullers, Giraffe and Watermark.

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