With the government facing criticism for its approach to the Covid-19 outbreak, our safety depends on us putting forward our own emergency plan to protect our and our passengers’ health.

LU has already taken some steps to reduce the service, including the suspension of Night Tube and the closure of certain stations. We need to ensure workers affected by the service reduction are not pressured to work outside of their contractual hours. Basic frameworks and agreements must be upheld.

We also demand:

• increase cleaning standards to the level necessary to minimise risk
• take control of all TFL operations, including cancelling private contracts and bringing services, especially cleaning, in-house
• guarantee that all staff, whether directly or indirectly employed, can stay off work if following government guidance, with no threat of disciplinary action or loss of pay
• take serious measures to reduce unnecessary social contact, including shutting multi-use touchscreen devices such as ticket machines (and therefore allowing people to travel without tickets); congestion control; allowing staff to work from home where possible. We strongly encourage staff on the frontline to implement these measures themselves wherever possible.

• demand the restoration of the government grant to TfL, plus emergency funding to deal with the crisis and associated loss of income

• establish a monitoring committee, including representatives of passenger groups and trade unions, to sit in permanent session during this crisis to scrutinise information and recommend necessary actions.

The last is particularly important, as it allows us to keep up with a rapidly-changing situation and to assert the right of working people - workers and passengers - to scrutinise and drive the policies that directly affect us.

We want our unions to put these demands to the employers - and ultimately, the Mayor. But this is an issue for everyone, so we can build support for it among the travelling public, and the wider labour movement.
SAFE STAFFING DURING CLOSURES
Certain managers are trying to cut corners during the current closures.

We’ve heard stories of AMs trying to babysit closed Section 12 stations with CSAs, or remove staff from them entirely.

If trains are running, even closed stations need properly-licensed staff.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE
Instructors operators on a number of lines are refusing to take anyone else in their cab at the current time. Tubeworker thinks they are right to refuse.

Social distancing has to be upheld. If that means sending trainees home on full pay then the company should do it.

If a single member of any training group goes into self isolation, there should be a guarantee that any training that is suspended or deferred with no loss of pay, particularly for workers who are not existing LU employees and so cannot be expected to work operationally before their training is complete.

KEEP OUR UNIONS GOING
Our trade unions don’t need to shut down during the crisis.

Video conferencing technology like Zoom can enable meetings to continue. RMT Neasden branch has already successfully experimented with this. Other branches should follow suit.

WFH?
Most offices have been shut down, with staff asked to work from home.

This is putting strain on the remote access network. Things are a bit less clear for staff who don’t have their own laptop or PC at home. We should demand the company provide laptops for those who need them.

There are also rumours that TIL visitor centre staff have been told to work on stations, work for which they are not adequately trained or paid. Don’t do it!

BOSSES EXPLOIT CRISIS TO PINCH PENNIES ON PAY
LU bosses have cynically exploited the coronavirus crisis to pressure unions into accepting a shoddy pay settlement that three out of four had previously rejected.

RMT, Unite, and TSSA have accepted LU’s RPI+0.2% (2019-2023) offer, after senior manager Peter McNaught issued unions with an ultimatum that, if they didn’t accept, it would be withdrawn and replaced with a worse offer. At the time of Tubeworker going to press, Aslef had not formally accepted, but we understand they are likely to. LU has used a global pandemic to avoid making further concessions on pay/conditions, showing again that the bosses are not suspending their side of the class struggle.

While we acknowledge the difficulty of the situation, and that refusing to accept the offer would’ve been a gamble, Tubeworker thinks acceptance was wrong, and would’ve preferred our unions to hold firm in the face of management blackmail. Now we need to use our anger at management’s cynical conduct to prepare new battles.

The deal runs to 2023, but we should not give the bosses three years of peace. We should prepare new, offensive disputes for the demands in our pay claims, ideally combine-wide, but function-specific if necessary.

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Got a story for Tubeworker? We welcome reports and comments from all Tube workers.

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FIGHT ROGUE MANAGERS
Word reaches Tubeworker HQ of rogue managers throwing their weight around.

Staff who are self-isolating have had messages from managers telling them they “don’t meet the criteria”, and Pressing them to come back to work.

These managers need to back off. All workers must be able to follow public health advice in full.

SHOULD THE TUBE SHUT DOWN?
Some workers are now arguing the Tube should shut down altogether, to maximise social distancing.

We think that’d be the wrong move, for now. Without an alternative transport infrastructure to move health workers and other key workers around, a total shutdown could do more harm than good.

Workers’ control of planning, and passengers stopping non-essential travel, can ensure that a critical service is maintained in as safe a way as possible.

CLEANERS ARE “KEY WORKERS” TOO
LU staff have been designated “key workers” during the pandemic, meaning, among other things, they’ll be able to keep kids in school.

Cleaners and other contractors are also part of the core Tube workforce. They need “key worker” status too.