

Covid-19: Railway maintenance continues to keep critical supply lines open

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Routine repairs and maintenance continue on the nationally critical West Coast main line to ensure vital supplies and key workers keep moving.

Last weekend Network Rail staff, who are classed as transport key workers in Britain's Covid-19 response, worked up and down Europe's busiest mixed-use (passenger and freight) railway to keep it resilient and reliable.

Work included:

- Repairs to overhead power lines between Watford Junction and Euston. This was the final stage of work to fix 1,000 metres of overhead wires brought down at South Kenton on Saturday 7 March.
- Stabilising a railway embankment at Birkthwaite, near Carlisle, weakened by weeks of heavy rain and storms leading to concerns about structures holding up overhead electric wires.
- Meanwhile at Wembley on the Chiltern main line, which links London Marylebone to Birmingham, engineers refurbished switches and crossings, which guide trains from one track to another. With so many trains passing over this stretch of track, these bits of kit take a beating and so need to be replaced from time to time.

Tim Shoveller, managing director of Network Rail's North West and Central (NW&C) region, said: "As key

workers in the transport sector, colleagues have been working around the clock this weekend to make sure that we can get NHS medics, emergency service staff, food, fuel and medicines where they need to be.

“We are continuing to plan carefully while supporting our railway colleagues, especially those in critical front line roles, as we all work together to support Britain in its hour of need. Our role in Britain’s coronavirus response is clear – to keep key workers and vital supplies moving safely as together we rise to this challenge.”

The rail industry has announced a new reduced timetable will operate from Monday 23 March, with scope for more freight traffic amid reducing demand for passenger services.

This will ensure that critical supplies and key workers are able to keep moving over the coming months to help tackle spread of Covid-19.

Photo credit: Network Rail