

Dates revealed for the next key works of the £1.2 billion East Coast Upgrade

September 3, 2020



Dates for key works on the £1.2 billion East Coast Upgrade have now been confirmed, with a programme aimed at delivering improvements for passengers as soon as possible, Network Rail said.

Once complete, the upgrade will deliver improved reliability and punctuality for passengers and will ensure the route has the capacity to deal with future passenger volumes.

A major part of the project is replacing tracks and a track layout, which is nearly 50 years old, on the 1.5-mile approach into London King's Cross. This work requires the temporary closure of individual tracks and platforms at King's Cross at different times over a three-month period.

This partial closure is scheduled to take place between Monday 1 March and Friday 4 June 2021. There are closures also planned for this year, at Christmas and over a number of weekends next year, including February 26, 27 and 28; April 23, 24, 25, and June 5 and 6.

It will mean that from 1 March to 4 June 2021, there will be temporary changes to LNER, Great Northern, Thameslink, Hull Trains and Grand Central services, with a slightly reduced peak service into and out of

King's Cross compared to current levels. Off-peak services will be less impacted, and passengers will be encouraged to travel at less busy times.

The King's Cross work will include a re-design of the track layout and re-opening a third tunnel closed in the 1970s, to create six tracks into the station, instead of the current four. This will increase reliability and enable trains to arrive and leave the station more rapidly, helping to keep trains on time.

This essential work has been designed to minimise disruption for passengers by maintaining most services into and out of King's Cross, while delivering improved reliability as quickly as possible.

Ahead of the work at King's Cross, Network Rail is also building a new tunnel and 1.9 miles of new line at Werrington, north of Peterborough so that slower moving freight trains will no longer cut across the East Coast Main Line, helping to unlock capacity on the route. This will mean a nine-day period of disruption between 16 and 24 January 2021, with reduced long-distance services and longer journey times.

Train operators are working together to develop a dedicated timetable to support customers during this period, which will also reflect ongoing changes to travel demand due to COVID-19. Further details will be available in winter 2020.

A passenger awareness campaign will start in the coming weeks advising customers to plan ahead and check before travelling. The biggest impact will be on customers travelling at peak times, so passengers will be advised to travel outside of these times where possible or to seek alternative ways into and out of London.

Thameslink services to St Pancras International and Great Northern services to Moorgate will operate to a normal timetable, except during certain weekends when engineering work affects the wider area.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "The £1.2 billion East Coast Upgrade programme is vital to improve the service on the railway for tens of thousands of passengers who travel on the line.

"We know these works will cause some disruption and inconvenience, and apologise to those affected, but we also know that this short-term pain will deliver long-term gain for passengers along the entire route.

"The King's Cross work will cut congestion and speed up arrivals and departures every day, when it's complete. And that's why we are grateful to everyone for their patience while these vital works are done."

Ed Akers, Principal Programme Sponsor for Network Rail said: "The East Coast Upgrade is going to deliver massive benefits for reliability and train capacity for passengers – but we can't deliver the work without some short-term disruption.

"Restricting access to such a key station is a tremendously complex job of planning and preparation and it's a tribute to the industry that we have managed to schedule this work despite all the other pressures caused by the pandemic.

"We want to deliver this vital job with as little disruption as possible, but we know it's going to have an

impact on people going about their daily lives. I'm sorry about that, but I promise it will be worth it in the long run and I'd like to thank passengers for bearing with us while we work."

David Horne, Managing Director of London North Eastern Railway (LNER) said: "The East Coast Upgrade is an essential part of the long-term transformation of rail services, that will improve reliability for our passengers. We are working closely with other operators to minimise the impact of the disruption on customers as Network Rail delivers this vital project."

Steve White, Chief Operating Officer of Govia Thameslink Railway said: "We welcome this investment and are working closely with our partners at Network Rail, and other operators, to ensure our that customers can continue to travel during these essential works. The ambition is to ensure more trains run on time every day because we understand that performance is the highest priority for our customers."

Anthony Smith, Chief Executive of the independent watchdog Transport Focus said: "Passengers will welcome these improvements, but not the potential disruption to journeys needed to deliver them. The industry must work together so that throughout the works next year there are enough trains, of sufficient length, to allow for any social distancing that is required."

"We will work with the industry to help it ensure information is crystal clear and passengers know well in advance what the timetable is. The temporary timetable also needs to run reliably. Poor punctuality on top of a reduced timetable will not be welcome."

Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the £1.2 billion upgrade has seen:

- the completion of a new platform and track at Stevenage, a year ahead of revised schedule, restoring Great Northern weekday services between Stevenage and Hertford North at a new, higher frequency;
- the continuation of work at Werrington north of Peterborough on a new tunnel and 1.9 mile of new track so that slower moving freight trains will no longer need to cross the East Coast Main Line, helping unlock capacity on the route;
- ongoing work to renew and expand the tracks that serve King's Cross, including reopening a third tunnel closed in the 1970s, so trains can more reliably enter and leave the station.

Current key dates for the upgrade work are as follows

(these are subject to change and passengers will be kept informed of any changes):

2020

- Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 September – King's Cross Station closed for work to platforms, tracks and the removal of lighting columns. People who need to travel to or from London are strongly advised to check before travelling via National Rail Enquiries, at EastCoastUpgrade.co.uk or with their train operator, and allow plenty of time for their journey. They may need to change trains and services are expected to be busier than normal.

- Saturday 17 and Sunday 18 October – King’s Cross Station closed for work to signals and overhead lines. No services to or from King’s Cross Station or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park
- Saturday 14 and Sunday 15 November – Reduced service into King’s Cross Station to continue work on overhead lines and on signals
- Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 November – King’s Cross Station closed for overhead line works. No services to or from King’s Cross Station or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park
- Saturday 28 and Sunday 29 November – Reduced service into and out of King’s Cross Station for work on track and overhead lines
- Thursday 24 December (Christmas Eve) – An amended timetable will be in place
- Friday 25 and Saturday 26 December (Christmas Day and Boxing Day) – No services along the entire route
- Sunday 27 through to Wednesday 30 December – No services to or from King’s Cross Station
- Thursday 31 December through to Sunday 3 January – An amended timetable will operate

2021

- A number of weekends in January will see an amended timetable into and out of London King’s Cross. We advise customers to check before they travel
- Saturday 30 and Sunday 31 January – No services to or from King’s Cross Station, or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park
- Friday 26, Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 February – No services to or from King’s Cross Station or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park
- Monday 1 March through to Friday 4 June – A temporary, dedicated timetable will operate at King’s Cross station to support the relaying of the redesigned track layout with reduced services operating. At peak times such as between 8-9AM on weekdays, ten trains per hour will arrive at King’s Cross, two fewer than operate today, with a reduced impact at less busy times when fewer trains usually operate
- Friday 23 through to Sunday 25 April – No services to or from King’s Cross Station for all three days or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park on the Saturday and Sunday
- Saturday 5 and Sunday 6 June – No services to or from King’s Cross Station or to or from St Pancras Station via Finsbury Park

Engineering work between Grantham, Peterborough and Stamford Stations for the Werrington works

- Nine-day closure period from Saturday 16 January to Sunday 24 January 2021 – Limited services between Grantham and Peterborough, with many passengers needing to transfer to rail replacement services while work continues on a new section of railway at Werrington which will free up space for extra passenger services
- Three-day closure period in mid-2021 – No services between Stamford and Peterborough, no services between Grantham and Peterborough on the second two days, with many passengers needing to transfer to rail replacement services to complete the new infrastructure at Werrington

Photo credit: Network Rail

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