

Emergency work to repair landslip between Woking and Basingstoke

December 1, 2023



Network Rail and South Western Railway (SWR) are urging passengers who are planning to travel on the line between Woking and Basingstoke to only travel if absolutely necessary following a landslip which needs urgent repairs.

Remote condition monitoring detected movement in a 100-metre-long slope next to the St John's Hill Road overbridge between Brookwood and Woking in Surrey.

Network Rail's geotechnical and structures experts have discovered cracks up to 45 metres long, 50cm wide and a metre deep in some places.

To keep customers safe before the work begins, Network Rail has introduced a 20mph speed restriction to enable services to keep running through this area.

Working closely with SWR, Network Rail has taken the decision to proactively close part of the railway next week to stabilise the cutting and prevent a more disruptive and potentially dangerous landslip, with forecast cold and wet weather making this highly likely if action isn't taken.

This weekend Network Rail will prepare the worksite, bringing in specialist equipment and machinery before starting work on installing a metal wall in the early hours of Monday morning.

Following this, on Wednesday 6, Friday 8, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 December, Network Rail's engineers will work around the clock to install 170 sheet piles, 10-metre-long pieces of steel driven into the ground at the base of the slope.

Each pile takes around an hour to install and the wall will prevent any earth slipping onto the tracks. Other sections of the cutting have also been identified as needing stabilisation and further work will be required to address this in the future.

While the work is taking place, this stretch of railway will reduce from four tracks to two. Trains travelling through the area will need to be manually signalled by Network Rail engineers using red and green 'hand signals' – similar to traffic control during some roadworks – further reducing the number of services that are able to run.

Train service overview

- On Wednesday 6 December, a reduced number of services were due to run in this area due to planned ASLEF strike action, and will be unaffected by the works.
- On Thursday 7 December, SWR's full service will be impacted by the ASLEF overtime ban. More information can be found at [southwesternrailway.com/strike](https://www.southwesternrailway.com/strike).
- From Friday 8 to Sunday 10 December, a severely reduced service will operate on the mainline between Basingstoke and Woking, impacting the routes to Exeter, Salisbury, Southampton, Bournemouth and Weybridge.
- From Friday 8 to Sunday 10 December, trains FROM London Waterloo will not be able to serve Brookwood. A rail replacement bus service will operate from Woking to Brookwood.
- Customers are urged to check www.southwesternrailway.com/wokinglandslip and journey planners will be up to date on Sunday 3 December.

Matt Pocock, Network Rail Wessex route director, said: "I would like to thank customers and local residents for their patience and understanding over the coming week while our teams work tirelessly to complete emergency work to stabilise this precarious cutting between Woking and Brookwood.

"There is never a good time to close any part of the railway but the safety of our customers and railway colleagues is our number one priority. It's imperative that we act now to prevent any further landslip, which would cause even longer delays.

"We have worked closely with our colleagues at SWR to identify the least disruptive time to do this and next week provides an opportunity with industrial action reducing the number of services that will be in operation. However, unfortunately there will be severely reduced services as a result.

"Our teams will be working extremely hard to stabilise the embankment as quickly and safely as possible

so we can get customers moving again and prevent any future landslips.”

Stuart Meek, South Western Railway Chief Operating Officer, said: “We’ve worked closely with our colleagues at Network Rail to ensure that landslip repairs are carried out as quickly as possible while causing the least amount of disruption to our customers.

“Because engineers will require access to two of the four tracks through the area, with changes to signalling, we will only be able to run three trains an hour in either direction. This is down from the normal 16 trains an hour, on what is one of the busiest parts of the country’s railway network.

“As a result, we are sorry to have to ask customers intending to travel on our services, between Woking and Basingstoke, to only travel if their journeys are absolutely necessary, on Friday 8, Saturday 9 and Sunday 10 December.

“We’re very sorry for the disruption. If you must travel please check using a journey planner or at our website – southwesternrailway.com/plan-my-journey.”

Photo credit: Network Rail