

Engineers to upgrade final section of 1970s slab track over Christmas

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Teams from Network Rail will carry out the last stage of work to overhaul circa 42-year-old track running between Kentish Town and London St Pancras this Christmas and over New Year.

The hope is this will provide a more modern reliable railway for passengers travelling through the area, and consequently reduce delays. Engineers envisage there will also be less disruption caused by maintenance.

Between the early hours of Christmas Day and before the first service on Wednesday 5 January 2022, engineers will remove the older track – installed in 1979 – which has reinforced concrete slab underneath it. New ballasted track will then be installed with stones and sleepers to support it.

As the work goes ahead, there will be reduced East Midlands Railway (EMR) and Thameslink services, affecting journeys between Monday 27 December and Tuesday 4 January.

Network Rail is carrying out this major stage of the project starting Christmas Day and Boxing Day when there are no timetabled services running on this part of the railway to minimise disruption.

The infrastructure owner and manager said there will also be Midland Main Line electrification upgrades on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, also to take advantage of there being no timetabled services.

Along with work to upgrade the power supply south of Bedford and work to transform an old power station, these improvements will allow more trains to run on the route and bring faster, more reliable services for passengers.

Gary Walsh, route director for Network Rail's East Midlands route, said: "We're taking the opportunity to make progress on the final stages of work to upgrade the track between London and Kentish Town over Christmas. The project will bring smoother, more reliable services and reduce delays – and the majority of it can only be done safely when no trains are running.

"As well as major work at Kentish Town and around Market Harborough, which will transform journeys for passengers, our teams are spending Christmas carrying out improvements and maintenance work across the region to make sure services can run safely and reliably for years to come.

"Passengers planning to travel over the festive period are reminded to check their journey, plan ahead and allow plenty of time."

Jenny Saunders, customer services director for Thameslink and Great Northern, said: "The Kentish Town project is bringing our passengers a more modern, reliable railway. We're able to run a reduced service so that people can still travel during the work, and we advise customers to check train times in advance."

Neil Grabham, Customer Service Director for EMR said: "We know that many of our passengers will be using our train services to travel around and visit family and friends over the Christmas period.

"Any passengers planning on travelling between Monday 27 December and Tuesday 4 January are advised to check our website and plan their journey in advance, as we will be running a reduced EMR Intercity service to and from London St Pancras.

"We would like to thank passengers for their patience whilst these crucial engineering works are taking place."