

Essential maintenance on Heart of Wessex line to begin in February

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The railway line between Dorchester West and Castle Cary will be closed for five days in February for vital maintenance.

Between Monday 15 and Friday 19 February buses will replace trains between the two stations while engineers carry out a package of work which will help to maintain reliability on the Bristol to Weymouth line, also known as the 'Heart of Wessex' line.

South of Yeovil Pen Mill station, engineers will remove loose material off the rockface of the railway cutting, install 250 metres of new lineside fencing and install equipment to monitor the cutting remotely.

Mark Killick, Network Rail Wessex route director, said: "This vital work will improve the reliability of the railway between Dorchester West and Castle Cary, which provides an important route for local communities.

"Closing the railway for five days means we can complete more work than over a series of weekend closures and would like to thank passengers for their continued patience as our engineers carry out this

much-needed maintenance.”

James Wilcox, Great Western Railway station manager for Wiltshire and Dorset, said: “While anyone choosing to travel should follow the latest Government advice, we have been working hard to make sure that those who do need to travel can be confident to do so safely, and that includes running as many trains and carriages as is necessary, as well as enhanced cleaning and social distancing measures.

“If you do need to travel, please do, plan ahead, reserve a seat and be considerate of others.”

During the closure, teams will take the opportunity to deliver additional maintenance.

Yeovil Pen Mill signal box, which controls signalling between Castle Cary and Dorchester West, is one of the country’s few remaining semaphore signal boxes, using levers to switch sets of points and lower and raise signal arms. At Yeovil Pen Mill station, engineers will replace sleepers that support the rails; a delicate task as teams will need to navigate historic signalling rods positioned alongside the railway and used to control the station’s semaphore signals.

Structural engineers will also use the time to conduct a thorough inspection of a bridge crossing the River Yeo, using cameras mounted on a Road Rail Vehicle (RRV).

Passengers should note that a separate closure will see buses replace trains between Bournemouth and Weymouth on Saturday 20 and Sunday 21 February.

Photo credit: Network Rail