

Flagship depot begins next major phase

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Engineering works at South Western Railway's (SWR) flagship £60m Feltham depot have entered the next major phase ahead of the Class 701 train rollout.

The bank holiday weekend saw the initial phase of vital new cabling and track connections take place. Work is set to continue over the next few months to fully connect the eastern and western parts of Feltham to the mainline infrastructure in time for the arrival of the new trains.

Since the beginning of the lockdown, strict working guidelines have been in place to ensure the safety of staff so vital engineering work could continue.

The depot will securely stable ten 10-car Class 701 trains, when the fleet is phased-in over the next few years, and provide modern facilities for SWR's drivers, guards, and train presentation teams to clean and maintain each train every night. Specialist servicing and train washing equipment will also be installed on site.

The project received funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) to install technology which automates shunting to provide a safer working environment and help quickly stable trains during significant periods of disruption.

The £60m depot is part of SWR's commitment to invest in a new fleet of trains in order to completely transform services offered to passengers travelling on the Reading, Windsor and West London suburban routes.

The new trains are a near-£1bn investment in more modern, faster and reliable services for passengers travelling to and from London Waterloo station. Fitted with the latest technology, these new trains will help more passengers arrive on time in the morning and during evening peak periods on one of Europe's busiest rail networks.

Built on the old Feltham marshalling yard in South West London, the investment brings a third of the vast site – 43,105m² (11 acres) – back into use following its closure in the late-1960s.

As part of SWR's commitment to sustainability, Feltham is designed to meet BREEAM's 'Excellent' standard – an industry-wide benchmark recognising projects which reduce energy usage, material waste and help protect the natural environment during construction.

FirstGroup (SWR's owners along with MTR) has been working in partnership with Network Rail and VolkerFitzpatrick, one of the UK's leading civil engineering companies, to help plan and manage the project as well as supply materials and engineering train services over the last three years.

Errol Douglas, Senior Project Manager (FirstGroup), said: "We're working hard to deliver this major engineering project, under carefully managed and safe conditions during the coronavirus lockdown, as part of our plans to transform services for passengers.

"The next phase of works at Feltham depot is an important milestone in a three-year project which has dramatically transformed a part of South West London that was formerly derelict. Once complete (later this year), passengers and staff will experience the benefit of our £1bn investment."

Phil Wood, VolkerFitzpatrick project manager, said: "Our achievements to date are the result of the strong working relationship with Network Rail and SWR. This partnership, and the investment provided by Network Rail and the DfT, will help rejuvenate this once derelict area of South West London, will create future employment in the areas and will provide SWR with a state-of-the-art facility for their new fleet of Class 701 trains.

"As works progress in the coming weeks, our teams will continue to work tirelessly to guarantee key milestones are achieved while safeguarding the safety of all operatives."

Photo and video credit: South Western Railway