

Keeping King's Cross on track – Main stage of £1.2billion upgrade begins

March 1, 2021



Network Rail has today started the main stage of a £1.2billion investment into the East Coast Main Line, which will transform journeys in and out of one of Britain's biggest and busiest stations.

Between 1 March and early June, hundreds of Network Rail workers will be on site 24/7 to simplify the track layout just outside of London King's Cross station. The complex work will see the current layout, which was laid forty years ago, lifted, replaced and realigned, creating smoother, more punctual and more reliable services for passengers.

Engineers will also complete vital work to reopen a tunnel on the approach to the station, which closed in the 1970s. This will provide two additional tracks, reducing congestion, creating additional capacity and making it easier for trains to enter and exit the historic transport hub.

The work taking place at King's Cross over the next three months is the main stage of the East Coast Upgrade and follows months of activity at the station. Once the work is completed in June, teams will have installed more than 6km of new track and 15km of overhead wires, which are used to power trains.

The rail industry has carefully planned the work to keep disruption to a minimum. Trains will still be able to run to and from King's Cross for the vast majority of the three-month period, whilst half the station is closed. This will be achieved through making temporary changes to the signalling system, with this work set to take place on 26, 27 and 28 February. On these three days, no trains will call at King's Cross station, with the following service changes in place:

- Most LNER services to/from the north of England and Scotland will start/end at Peterborough
- Two trains per hour will start/end at St Neots, where passengers can use replacement coach services to Bedford, to connect with trains between Bedford and St Pancras International

Passengers who need to make essential journeys on the East Coast Main Line over the coming months are strongly advised to check before travelling via National Rail Enquiries, with their train operator or at EastCoastUpgrade.co.uk. People should also allow plenty of time and avoid peak times where possible if travelling on longer distance journeys. Passengers travelling on all LNER services must have a seat reservation.

Ed Akers, Principal Programme Sponsor for Network Rail's East Coast Upgrade, said: "The work we are doing over the next three months is a crucial piece of the puzzle on the East Coast Upgrade.

"Untangling the complex track layout just outside of King's Cross and reopening a railway tunnel which has been closed for over 40 years will make it easier for trains to enter and exit the station, improving journeys for all those travelling to and from the station. This, when coupled with upgrades elsewhere along the route, such as improving the power supply and the construction of a new dive under tunnel near Peterborough, will mean faster and more frequent services, better connecting towns and cities across the country and offering more choice for passengers.

"We continue to work closely with train operators on this industry leading project to make sure that the impact on those who need to make essential journeys is as little as possible."

Rail Minister, Chris Heaton-Harris, said: "The impressive work to not only replace and realign track, but to reopen a tunnel closed 40 years ago, underlines our determination to deliver major upgrades for passengers.

"As passengers return to our railway, these upgrades will make journeys in and out of one of Britain's most historic stations more punctual and reliable, and I want to thank all those keeping services running as the work is carried out."

David Horne, LNER Managing Director, said: "The transformation in LNER's services delivered by the East Coast Upgrade will be the biggest in a generation, with huge benefits for communities along our route. We've made significant progress to date, supporting our customers throughout, and are now entering the final stage of the work.

"Until early June, engineering work at London King's Cross will mean limited capacity as no more than half of the station platforms will be available at any one time. During this, we will have a temporary timetable that allows us to support as many customers as possible, for when travel restrictions begin to be eased."

Grand Central and Hull Trains have suspended their services whilst non-essential travel has been prohibited and will resume in line with the relaxation of Government restrictions.

Photo credit: Network Rail