

# Longer platforms and improved ticket gates in £10 million boost for passengers to support the Gatwick Airport station upgrade

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Passengers from three stations in West and East Sussex can now get on and off the full length of longer Southern trains thanks to platform extensions built by Network Rail and funded by the Department for Transport.

Built to support a new timetable during the construction of the £150m upgrade of Gatwick Airport station, longer trains are now opening their doors on extended platforms at Goring-by-Sea and Lancing in West Sussex and Cooksbridge in East Sussex.

The work has been completed thanks to a £10 million investment from the Department for Transport, which will also be used to install improved ticket gates and digital customer information screens at the modernised airport station, already under construction and due to be completed in 2023.

Construction work on the platforms was completed earlier this summer and, following testing and signalling upgrades, they are now ready to open and allow passengers to access the full length of the

trains. This also means level crossings at Goring and Lancing will be closed for much shorter times, cutting traffic congestion.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "As this huge project continues apace, our investment is already delivering benefits for rail passengers, allowing for longer trains, more seats and supporting greater social distancing, giving people the confidence to get back onto the railway.

"This has been achieved thanks to the efforts of construction staff, who are doing a fantastic job working safely under social distancing rules to create a more modern station for passengers and airport users."

Network Rail's investment director for Southern Region, Paul Harwood, said: "The investment at Gatwick Airport station isn't just about creating a new station, it's about improving services across Sussex.

"Through extending platforms we're able to create more space on trains for passengers, which is really important for people during COVID, but it will also improve punctuality as people will be able to use all the doors on their trains. Equally, at Gatwick itself, putting in better, wider gates, on top of the new concourse, lifts, escalators and wider platforms, will improve performance and people's journeys too."

Managing Director of Southern and Gatwick Express Angie Doll said: "The benefits of these platform extensions at three of our Sussex stations demonstrate just how important and far-reaching the redevelopment of Gatwick Airport station is. The project is transforming the journey experience for our airport station users, passengers across our network, motorists on local roads, and the entire regional economy.

"This significant investment will complement the multimillion-pound scheme of station improvements we're delivering for our passengers across our entire network."

Emma Rees, Head of Property and Surface Access at Gatwick Airport, said: "The improvements announced today will complement the huge upgrades to rail services at the airport and wider region in recent years. New fleets of Gatwick Express and Thameslink trains now leave the airport for London and destinations across the South East with increased frequency. When complete, the redesigned train station will provide a seamless transition and better accessibility between the airport and the station, with more lifts, escalators and a doubling in the size of the concourse."

Tim Loughton MP visited the platform extension at Lancing and said: "This is a very helpful investment by Network Rail and GTR and will be welcomed by many of my constituents on foot and in cars who waste too much time waiting for barriers to go up particularly during rush hour, simply because the platform cannot cope with 8 coach trains. Air quality will benefit too as car engines idling less means fewer polluting emissions. This represents a win-win-win solution for drivers and pedestrians, passengers and the environment."

Sir Peter Bottomley, Member of Parliament for Worthing West, said: "My congratulations to the team for completing this upgrade so quickly. Passengers on the route are benefitting from twice as much space and this improvement at Goring-by-Sea is helping to keep local roads clear."

Maria Caulfield, Member of Parliament for Lewes, said: “The new eight carriage train service to London Victoria and Eastbourne is proving popular across the constituency for providing twice as much space on board, and the new platform extension is helping to get the level crossing open faster, tackling road congestion in the area.

“It’s also a major improvement for Cooksbridge, which in less than a year has gone from peak-time-only to a true 7-days per week service, something that is transformational for the local community. The success of the Cooksbridge Area Rail Action Group in securing these improvements is testament to the importance of local campaigners in working with the local rail company.”

*Photo credit: Network Rail*

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