

# Network Rail announces date for major upgrade to Leicestershire's railway

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Network Rail has announced the dates for a six-day rail closure in Market Harborough to allow major work to the county's railway to take place as part of the Market Harborough Line Speed Improvement Project which forms part of the £1.4bn Midland Mainline upgrade programme.

Between Tuesday 28 May and Sunday 2 June (inclusive), the section of the Midland Main Line which runs between Kettering and Leicester will be closed, with no trains able to run on it.

Network Rail is currently working to install almost two miles of track in a new, straighter alignment as well as new signalling equipment. During the six-day closure, engineers will connect the new straighter track to the existing track, enabling passenger services to run on the new alignment from Monday 3 June when all train services resume.

To allow this work to take place safely, no train services will run on this part of the line. Instead coach

replacement services and diversionary routes will be in operation. There will also be some reduction of East Midlands Trains services and extended journey times on its services to and from London. Passengers are strongly urged to check before they travel via the dedicated web page [eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/mhr2019](http://eastmidlandstrains.co.uk/mhr2019)

This vital work is part of the Market Harborough Line Speed Improvement Project which is a £53 million investment into the railway in this area. Once completed, trains will be able to travel through the area at higher speeds.

The project will also see improvements to Market Harborough railway station, such as a new footbridge with lifts which will make journeys more accessible for all station users. Work will also take place to extend platforms, to reduce stepping distances onto trains whilst also catering for longer trains with more seats.

Car parking at the station will also be improved. A new 300 space car park has already been constructed providing step-free access to platforms for passengers arriving by car and car parking spaces at the station will increase by another 200 by December 2019.

Rob McIntosh, Route Managing Director for Network Rail, said: "This work is the crux of the Market Harborough Line Speed Improvement project and will see the new, straightened track connected to the existing line.

"There's never an ideal time to carry out this type of work and we do appreciate that the work will be disruptive. We are working closely with East Midlands Trains to keep passengers moving and we thank passengers for their patience.

"This project will also bring improvements to Market Harborough station and will make sure we can continue to meet the needs of the communities and economies which our railway serves."

Jake Kelly, Managing Director for East Midlands Trains said: "We are working alongside Network Rail to deliver a vastly improved Market Harborough station and by the end of 2019 it will provide lifts and a new footbridge, a significantly larger customer car park, longer platforms for longer trains and straighter track for quicker journeys across the Midland Main Line.

"We appreciate that the closure of the station will inconvenience some of our passengers during this time however, the improvement works will make the station more accessible for all our passengers in the future".

Tom Goshawk, Capital Projects Manager for the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, said: "Fast and efficient transport is vital to economic growth. That is why the D2N2 LEP has put £5million of its Local Growth Fund allocation into the Market Harborough Line Speed Improvement Project; funding alongside neighbouring LEPs, Sheffield City Region and the Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership.

"The line closure will allow vital works as part of this £53m project, enabling trains to travel more quickly along this length of the Midland Main Line, with major improvements also to Market Harborough railway station."

Kevin Harris, Chair of the LLEP said: “The Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) have contributed £3m of Local Growth Fund towards the station and line improvements at Market Harborough.

“Inevitably major works of this nature cause unavoidable disruption. However, this is just a few days, after which, faster non-stop journey times between London St. Pancras, Leicester, Derby, Nottingham and Sheffield will be possible.

“These important works will lead to better time table capacity and flexibility which is good news for commuters and the shorter travel time to London is a major factor for businesses investing in the region.”