

Network Rail announces date to reopen all four lines through Hook

February 10, 2023



Engineers working around the clock to repair a huge landslip at Hook in Hampshire aiming to reopen all four lines by Friday 24 February.

Following the landslip, it was only possible to run one train every 90 minutes between Basingstoke and Woking. A short time later, Network Rail took the unusual step of reconfiguring the track layout onto a stable section of the embankment to enable six trains an hour to run through the area.

Although this has provided an improved train service over the past few weeks whilst the embankment repairs continued, it means our engineers need to close the railway again once the embankment is repaired to reinstate the track layout to its original position.

Route director Mark Killick gave this update:

So, what does it mean for customers?

- Once the embankment repairs are completed, from the start of service on Monday 13 February, trains travelling towards Basingstoke can call at Hook again. Trains will continue to run at a reduced frequency.
- From Monday 13 February until Thursday 23 February, engineers will close the railway between Farnborough and Basingstoke early each night to restore the track layout, which means alterations to late night and early morning services.
- The last through services between London Waterloo station and Basingstoke (stopping), Portsmouth Harbour via Eastleigh, Salisbury and Weymouth will depart much earlier than usual.
- South Western Railway (SWR) is securing rail replacement buses to operate between Woking/Farnborough and Basingstoke after 10pm each evening.
- Services for Monday 13 to Friday 17 February will be updated in Journey Planners by the morning of Friday 10 February. Services from Saturday 18 to Friday 24 February are being finalised and will be updated as soon as possible.
- Customers are asked to check before they travel and allow extra time to complete their journeys.
- From Friday 24 February, all four lines will reopen, and the full timetable will be reinstated, however Network Rail engineers and SWR will work hard to reinstate some services sooner, if possible.

Mark Killick, Network Rail's Wessex route director, said: "We'd like to thank customers and residents living alongside the railway for their patience while we've carried out this major repair.

"Fixing the landslip at Hook has been an incredibly tough and complicated job. I'm so sorry our customers will have to endure more disruption before we can reopen all four lines. Unfortunately, there is no perfect solution, but this approach is the least disruptive to our customers overall.

"We've taken the difficult decision to carry out the track layout work over multiple nights because I recognise how important it is to provide a direct service to and from London and the south west, particularly as the Portsmouth Direct Line will be closed from the 11 to 19 of February as part of a multi-million-pound upgrade that has been planned for more than two years.

"It's crucial this work goes ahead because customers wouldn't see the benefits soon enough and it would cost taxpayers a fortune to reschedule and cause more disruptive closures in the future."

Stuart Meek, South Western Railway's chief operating officer, said: "The landslip at Hook has caused our customers significant disruption for more than three weeks now, so it is welcome news to hear we are a step closer to the embankment repairs being completed.

"To give Network Rail the time they need to realign the tracks, whilst also considering the large amount of engineering work across the rest of our network, we will need to make some changes to our late night and early morning services.

"We will confirm these alterations just as soon as we can. We're very grateful for our customers' continued patience through what has been a frustrating period of disruption."

The slip, on an embankment to the northeast of Hook station, happened on Saturday 14 January, and left

only two tracks of the four-track railway passable by trains, with both tracks designed to be used by London-bound trains only.

The landslip is in such a remote location that engineers needed to build a 580-metre-long access road across fields to get materials and machinery to the site, before the repair work could even begin.

Engineers are building a 60-metre retaining wall, made up of one hundred 12-metre long 'sheet piles' which are driven into the ground to stabilise the embankment and protect the railway from future landslips. As well as using 9,000 tonnes of stone in the repair, they will also regrade the steepness of the embankment slope to reduce the risk of material falling.

Photo credit: Network Rail