

Network Rail announces nine-day closure of South East London lines to complete critical signalling work

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The railway through Hither Green, in South East London, will be closed for nine days from Saturday 25 July to Sunday 2 August, as Network Rail completes signalling upgrades through the area.

The 1970s signalling system, which controls the movement of trains on the Bromley North, Sidcup branches and main line through Hither Green, is being completely replaced with a modern, more reliable system.

Buses will replace trains on affected routes for the nine days, with services resuming on Monday, 3 August.

Extra buses will be laid on to make sure social distancing can be achieved on the replacement services. Tickets will be accepted on alternative routes and Transport for London services, which will also be

increased to ensure passengers travelling can maintain a 2m distance.

While extra capacity will be laid on, only critical passengers and those who absolutely must travel are advised to.

Fiona Taylor, Network Rail route director for Kent, said: "This work is so important for delivering a reliable railway for the many passengers who travel through this area. The signalling system is very old and in urgent need of upgrade.

"We wanted to get this work done over Easter but because technicians can't work closely together for long periods, it is going to take double the amount of time it would normally take to finish the job.

"We have taken the decision to complete the work in the summer holidays because we wanted to give those passengers who are still travelling, many of them critical workers, enough time to plan ahead. We also need time to put alternative travel options in place, such as an enhanced bus replacement service.

"Our advice to passengers over the nine days remains the same – Please only travel if you really have to, leaving space on trains for those who really need it. We are working with Southeastern to make provision for social distancing at stations and on buses. I recognise that this is a tough ask for people who are already coping with changes to travel, but this vital upgrade will provide a more reliable and resilient railway for years to come."

Southeastern Train Services Director, Scott Brightwell said: "The current Government advice is to please only travel if your journey is absolutely essential and to avoid public transport unless you have no alternative. People are also being asked to work from home if they can.

"We obviously don't know what the travel advice will be at the end of July, when the Hither Green work is taking place, but we are alerting our passengers now so they can plan ahead. We will provide full details about alternative travel arrangements later in the summer."

The work taking place over the nine days is the commissioning of the new signalling equipment and the transfer of control from London Bridge Area Signalling Centre to Three Bridges Rail Operating Centre. It will mark the end for the old signalling location, which has been in continuous use since 1975.

The work is a key part of Network Rail's £250m investment to improve signalling and track reliability through the busy Lewisham area of South East London.

People can find out more about the project at www.networkrail.co.uk/HitherGreen. The site will also be updated with detailed travel advice when alternative travel options are published.

Photo credit: Network Rail