

# Major rail upgrades completed across the UK over the festive period

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Network Rail has completed a range of essential upgrades to the railway throughout the UK over the festive period.

Hundreds of engineers worked over the Christmas and New Year period with work to improve track, structures and equipment to make rail travel safer and more reliable.

## **Euston, the Midlands and the North West**

- Ongoing work to upgrade Birmingham New Street station's signals – the complex system and traffic lights of the railway which keep trains running safely
- Work to improve the overhead lines which power trains near Watford, Liverpool and Crewe.
- A bridge rebuilding project in Stafford.
- Track upgrades in Euston, Aylesbury, Preston and Manchester.

Tim Shoveller, managing director for Network Rail's North West & Central region, said: "The schemes we have undertaken this Christmas were all critical pieces of work to make the railway better for the future.

"I'm very proud of our frontline workers who have continued to work tirelessly throughout the pandemic to maintain and upgrade the railway for those who need it. This festive period has been no different, with hundreds of workers out delivering significant improvements, sometimes in very challenging weather conditions, across the North West and Central region."

### **London Waterloo to Surrey, Hampshire and Wiltshire**

- Upgrade of track and switches and crossings and the clearing of vegetation between Clapham Junction and Waterloo, on a site near Nine Elms junction in south west London.
- Strengthened Millway Road bridge in Andover and cleared vegetation between Whitchurch and Andover;
- Upgraded the switches and crossings between Hook and Basingstoke and at Eastleigh West junction.
- Replaced track and supporting structures at Cow Lane bridge near Cosham, Portsmouth.
- Replaced timber structures on the bridge at Portcreek Junction, which is between Cosham and Hilsea.

Mark Killick, Network Rail Wessex route director, said: "I want to pay tribute to the hundreds of staff who worked between Christmas and new year to improve the railway for passengers.

"I want to thank passengers for their understanding while the work has gone on, and also the communities where our teams have been working 24/7, as we know it can be difficult to have so much work going on next to your home.

"Unfortunately, during the holiday period our people also dealt with two unexpected incidents. Following Storm Bella, a landslip meant we needed to deliver emergency work close to Wanborough station. Also, while the work at Nine Elms was taking place, a section of brick wall on a viaduct collapsed, and there will be some changes to South Western Railway services from Waterloo as a result.

"We are rebuilding the wall as quickly as possible; there were no injuries and investigations continue into the cause of the collapse."

### **South London and Sussex**

- Engineers worked on the Brighton Main Line to improve the reliability of the vitally important stretch of railway between Croydon and Three Bridges. A set of points, which allow trains to cross from one track to another, were refurbished at Three Bridges on Christmas Day while two sets of points were refurbished at East Croydon and two at Norwood Junction.
- Work on the Gatwick [station upgrade](#) is continuing on schedule with the final span of the site access bridge across platforms 3 to 7 lifted in, strengthening works and piling continuing to prepare island platforms 3 and 4 for the arrival of a new escalator. There was also piling- foundation work – started on the island platforms 5 & 6 which will be widened and new escalators and stairs installed connecting to a brand new station concourse above.

Angie Doll, Managing Director for Southern and Gatwick Express, said: “We welcome Network Rail’s major investments to improve our passengers’ travel experiences, and we’re grateful for their careful planning and hard work to minimise disruption to services. These vital improvements will be complemented by our own network wide, multimillion-pound programme, bringing new and better facilities to every one of our stations as customers return to the railway this year.

“When you travel with us, you can be assured that we are working hard behind the scenes to ensure your trains and stations are clean and safe. Please remember the golden rules – hands, face, space: wash your hands before and after your journey, wear a face covering and keep your distance from others.”

## **Anglia**

- At London Liverpool Street, six points, which allow trains to change from one track to another, were refurbished to prevent failures that lead to delays. Overhead wires and structures were replaced at Stratford that adapt to temperature changes, essential for improving reliability, especially in hot weather, to prevent delays on this busy section of the railway.
- At Colchester station, switches and crossings units were replaced and a crossover was refurbished at Norwich station. These are essential pieces of track that enable trains to change lines and use any of the platforms at each station.
- Wheel timbers were renewed at Trowse on the Great Eastern Main Line in Norwich to strengthen and support the track and prevent faults that cause delays.
- Works were also carried out as part of the Crossrail project, including a power upgrade, and MTR Elizabeth line, who will operate the Elizabeth line on TfL’s behalf, started work to extend platforms 16 and 17 at Liverpool Street, in preparation for the full-length trains that are planned for 2021.
- Overhead wire and track maintenance work was also carried out on the Southend Victoria and Clacton-On-Sea branch lines to prevent delays. Wheel timbers were renewed River Cam bridge in Cambridgeshire on the West Anglia Main Line to strengthen and support the track and prevent faults that cause delays.
- Finally, structures works were carried out at three bridges including Chalk Farm and Camden Road in London and a full bridge replacement was completed at Postwick in Norfolk. This is vital for running safe and reliable services.

Ellie Burrows, Network Rail’s route director for Anglia, said: “All of this work, however large or small, has a positive impact across the whole network and is crucial to running a safe and reliable service for our passengers on all lines. I’d like to thank passengers for their patience while we carried out this important work.

“Further improvements are planned to take place over the coming weekends and I advise passengers to check before they travel.”

### **Among some of the other projects over Christmas**

- Teams at King's Cross have replaced a fragile sewer beneath the tracks to enable faster trains.
- Christmas track and signal work at Bristol East Junction progressed well as part of the Bristol Rail regeneration.
- Sections of track were replaced at Ardwick in Manchester to make journeys more reliable.
- Replaced the points just outside platforms 11 and 12 at Liverpool Street, boosting future reliability.
- At Cadder near Glasgow, a Kirow crane manoeuvred brand new sections of track into position.
- 1km of new overhead wiring being replaced at Watford for smoother journeys on the West Coast mainline.
- Four tamping machines pounded stone under the tracks, making the railway in Hemel Hempstead more durable.
- Specialist graffiti clean-up trams have been ridding the railway of unsightly vandalism on the West Coast mainline.

Despite all of the work, Network Rail staff at Birmingham New Street still found time to serve Christmas dinner to the homeless, whilst at Glasgow Central they hosted Christmas dinner for the homeless in an event organised by the Sikh community.

*Photo credit: Network Rail - Euston track work*