

Railway around Guildford reopens after biggest improvements for nearly 40 years

April 20, 2020



- 10 days of major engineering work over the Easter holidays completed on time
- Millions of passengers will benefit from a more reliable railway
- Brand new track and upgraded signalling equipment installed at Guildford station
- Speed restriction removed from St. Catherine's Tunnel, scene of two landslips in 2019

Network Rail engineers have successfully completed a massive upgrade of the railway around Guildford.

Between Friday 10 and Monday 20 April, teams worked a total of 20,000 hours to improve track, power supplies and signalling equipment around Guildford, one of the busiest parts of Network Rail's Wessex route.

Around 1,500 metres of new track was installed on lines approaching Guildford from Worplesdon and Wanborough, used by South Western Railway (SWR) and Great Western Railway (GWR) for services to

Gatwick Airport, London Waterloo, Reading, Woking and other major stations. The new track, designed to last up to 60 years, will see fewer failures that can cause delays.

Forty one track circuits, vital parts of the area's signalling system, were upgraded to improve reliability whilst 1,200 metres of conductor rail used to power trains was renewed on the line from Guildford to Clandon.

At St. Catherine's Tunnel, between Guildford and Shalford, engineers removed around 800 tonnes of sand and strengthened an embankment and rockface to prevent landslips. A 20mph speed restriction, imposed late last year following two landslips, was successfully removed and will allow trains to travel at normal speeds through the area, further reducing the risk of delays in the area.

At Guildford station itself the station's overbridge, used by hundreds of thousands of passengers and local residents every year, was given a facelift with new paintwork and anti-slip tiles.

Mark Killick, Route Director for Network Rail Wessex, said: "We've now completed the biggest rail improvement programme in the Guildford area for nearly 40 years, one that has taken two years to plan and will provide a more reliable railway and better journeys for passengers.

"I'd like to thank key workers and those unable to work from home for their patience during the works and also praise our railway heroes who adopted new practices and worked tirelessly over the Easter break. Their efforts will ensure the railway is ready and waiting for passengers once the pandemic restrictions are eventually lifted."

Christian Neill, Deputy Customer Experience Director for Southwestern Railway, said: "The work that was carried out over the Easter period will provide more reliable journeys for our customers. I'd like to send a huge thank you to all the teams involved, from the engineers at Network Rail to the replacement bus service teams, the teams on stations and trains to the British Transport Police.

"The biggest thank you goes to our customers for their patience and for only travelling if their journey was essential."

Barry Milsom, Performance Director for GWR, said: "Right now, our priority remains to run services that can be relied on at this time of uncertainty, providing essential transport for key workers to get to and from work.

"In order to do so the infrastructure on which our trains depend must be maintained, and improved, to continue to provide resilient and safe rail services and we thank Network Rail for the timely completion of this work."

Engineers will return to Guildford over the coming weeks, as planned, to conduct follow up work. This will take place on the following dates:

- Saturday 25 and Sunday 26 April
- Saturday 16 and Sunday 17 May

People making essential journeys are advised to check with their train operator for information about services.

Photo credit: Network Rail