RailBusinessDaily

Signalling upgrade sees Birmingham New Street platform changes

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Passengers at Birmingham New Street are being urged to check their platforms throughout 2021 while major signalling upgrades take place to improve future journeys.

A rolling programme of platform closures started in January so signalling equipment at the country's busiest interchange station outside of London can be completely overhauled.

Work started yesterday (Sunday 21 March) on platform 11 meaning it is closed to passengers. Meanwhile platform 12 is back in use.

Signalling is the complex system which keeps trains moving safely around the network.

Most of the equipment in use at Birmingham New Street is around 54 years old and is reaching the end of its working life.

Over the next 18 months state-of-the-art signalling is being installed to provide more reliable journeys for passengers.

People who still need to travel for reasons set out by the government are being urged to be aware of the signalling upgrade and its impact.

Dave Penney, Central route director for Network Rail, said: “While the majority of passengers will be following the government advice to stay at home during this latest national lockdown, there will be some who still need to use the railway to get to work and for essential medical appointments.

“I want those passengers still relying on the railway for any of the reasons permitted by government to have as smooth a journey as possible while this major signalling upgrade takes place. So, my advice is to always check which platform your train is on as this can change at short notice over the course of the rolling platform closures.

“This once in a generation overhaul of Birmingham New Street’s signalling equipment, at one of Britain’s most important stations, has been carefully planned to minimise disruption. Once complete, the West Midlands will have large areas using the newest and best signalling anywhere in Britain which will help provide a safe, reliable and high performing railway for decades to come.”

Trains may not arrive at or leave from their usual platform depending on which one is closed for the essential upgrade work.

Train timetables won’t be impacted by the resignalling project. However it will affect all of Birmingham New Street’s train operators which are:

- West Midlands Railway
- London Northwestern Railway
- Avanti West Coast
- CrossCountry
- Transport for Wales

Extra staff will be on hand to help passengers during the work and there will be more signs to help people find their way.

Information about which platform is closed and which platforms trains will use will be available across the station and on journey planning websites such as www.nationalrail.co.uk to help passengers get to where they need to go.

Alex Warner, chairperson of the Grand Rail Collaboration, representing train operators which use Birmingham New Street, said: “A key part of delivering for passengers is for train services to be reliable and with capacity for growth. A modern, state-of-the-art signalling system is essential in delivering this.

“This investment is vital for the long-term future of the railway in the West Midlands. In the short-term, the most important thing this to manage the impact and the fact no trains will be cancelled is great news for passengers.”

Malcolm Holmes, executive director for West Midlands Rail Executive, said: “Birmingham New Street is at

the centre of the West Midlands rail network and it needs the best technology to keep passengers and trains safely moving for many years to come. The industry has worked together to run a full timetable throughout this work, minimising disruption. The outcome will be a better, more reliable railway for the region."

This is the final piece of a signalling jigsaw which has seen upgrades across the wider West Midlands region since 2005.

The Birmingham New Street upgrade links in with work to modernise the routes to and from the station– including to Bromsgrove, Wolverhampton, Coventry and Tamworth.

Once complete in 2022, £600m will have been invested across the region.

During the work people can follow @NetworkRailBHM on Twitter for the latest updates.

Photo credit: Network Rail