

Stabilisation works near Wadhurst to make for more reliable services between Hastings and London

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Works to prevent future landslips from the steep cutting at the southern entrance to Wadhurst Tunnel will last at least sixty years and provide more reliable journeys.

Network Rail engineers are about to start work to prevent future landslips happening at a steep-sided cutting at the southern entrance to Wadhurst Tunnel.

The construction solutions the company is putting in place at the site near Tunbridge Wells will last 60 years, in an area that has suffered an unusual number of landslips in recent years. Incidents near Wadhurst that occurred in 2014, 2016, 2019 and 2020 led to many services being cancelled and inconvenience for passengers while they were repaired.

Fiona Taylor, Network Rail Kent route director, said: “We know passengers on the Hastings line have endured disruption over the years as a result of the way the railway was constructed many years ago, with changing weather patterns adding to the problems. For that reason we’ve developed a programme of work

to improve the most vulnerable sites on the route. We're starting on one end of Wadhurst tunnel now and will move on to other locations later this year."

Derek Butcher, Route Asset Manager at Network Rail, said: "This cutting was originally dug over a hundred and seventy years ago and is now in need of renewal to ensure that it is resilient for the future. The work uses soil nailing which is tried and tested as it allows for the slope to be strengthened and allows for some vegetation to grow while keeping the railway safe from landslips."

Special remote sensors, cameras and a temporary catchfence have been in place to mitigate the risk of further landslips which have required constant checking to ensure trains are safe to proceed ever since. Now, special anchors or 'soil nails' will be used to prevent future landslips combined with netting across the top of the cutting at the country end of the tunnel to keep soil and vegetation in place.

Photo credit: Network Rail – Wadhurst tunnel