

Track upgrade through 175-year-old Staffordshire tunnel

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Network Rail is investing £2 million to upgrade track through a 175-year-old tunnel which will lead to more reliable journeys for passengers travelling between Uttoxeter and Stoke-on-Trent.

This March, engineers will replace almost 1.6 kilometres of rail and supporting ballast and sleepers along both tracks through Meir railway tunnel to help more trains run on time between the two Staffordshire locations.

The tracks, which run between Longton and Blythe Bridge stations, haven't had any major work since 1968 and this essential upgrade will allow passengers to continue to use this route reliably for the next 50 years.

Steve Hopkinson, East Midlands Operations Director for Network Rail said: "This tunnel holds so much history and is a vital part of the railway in Staffordshire, and these upgrades will make sure that passengers can continue to travel through it reliably well into the future.

"To do the work safely, we inevitably need to close the tunnel so there will be some changes to services and I'm sorry if this impacts people's plans. Our best advice is to allow some extra time and to check your

journey before setting off.”

To carry out the work safely, the tunnel will be closed between Sunday 5 and Sunday 12 March. During this time, buses will replace trains between Uttoxeter and Stoke-on-Trent, ready for a normal train service to resume on Monday 13 March.

Passengers should plan ahead and check before they travel with [National Rail](#) or [East Midlands Railway](#).

Neil Grabham, Customer Services Director for EMR said: “Between Sunday 5 and Sunday 12 March we will be running a replacement rail service between Uttoxeter and Stoke-on-Trent.

“We are asking customers to plan ahead and allow plenty of time to carry out their journeys and we would like to thank them for their patience whilst Network Rail carry out work along the tracks.”

Meir tunnel was originally constructed by the North Staffordshire Railway in 1848 and now runs parallel to the A50 and a busy road tunnel of the same name.

Claire Sandys, Community Rail Officer for the North Staffordshire Community Rail Partnership, said: “We are pleased to see upgrade works take place at this critical point on the Crewe to Derby route where passengers rely on a quick and punctual service for work, leisure and education purposes.”

Photo credit: Network Rail