

Uninterrupted internet and mobile phone reception on the Brighton Mainline

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Network Rail has awarded a 25-year contract to Cellnex UK to provide continuous connectivity on the 51-mile stretch from London Bridge and Victoria stations, via Clapham Junction and East Croydon, all the way to Brighton.

Shaun King, Sussex route director at Network Rail, said: “The Brighton Mainline and its branch lines carry around 1,700 trains and 300,000 passengers a day at their busiest, through one of the UK’s most densely populated areas.

“The ability to stay connected on the go is now a basic expectation – one that is shared by Network Rail, train operators, government and, of course, passengers themselves.

“This deal will give passengers and communities near the railway seamless phone and internet connectivity, including in stations, tunnels and cuttings, all the way from London right down to the south coast.

“It’s a fantastic example of how Network Rail and Govia Thameslink Railway are partnering with the

private sector to deliver huge benefits to our customers and stakeholders, and really improve their journey experience.”

The new infrastructure will provide extra capacity for UK Mobile Network Operators thanks to the installation of towers that allow broadcasting of mobile signal along the railway, a small number of equipment boxes near to the railway to house the telecoms equipment, a high capacity fibre cable running the entire length of the mainline, and bespoke radio equipment to ensure uninterrupted coverage in tunnels and cuttings in the railway.

The programme is expected to take around 2 to 3 years to deliver, but the benefits will be switched on along the way with connectivity expected in London Bridge and London Victoria stations by April 2022.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris, said: “Delivering full and fast connectivity on the Brighton Mainline will be a real boost for passengers returning to our railway, helping them work and stay in touch without interruptions.

“We’re focused on building back better, investing to give passengers a more modern experience, and I welcome further initiatives to expand this capability across our network.”

Keith Jipps, Infrastructure Director at Govia Thameslink Railway which runs Southern, Thameslink and Gatwick Express, said: “Network coverage along our most important rail route between London and the south coast is patchy and frustrating for our passengers. Getting an uninterrupted connection, even through the tunnels, will be brilliant – and having that in superfast 5G will be even better! We’re responding to customer feedback with this project – and communities along the route will benefit too. This is great piece of work.”

Photo credit: Network Rail