

# Upholland tunnel repairs to make railway more reliable for passengers

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A historic railway tunnel in West Lancashire is being made more reliable for passengers this month.

More than £1m is being invested in Upholland tunnel, between Upholland and Orrell stations, as part of the Great North Rail Project to improve journeys for passengers in the North of England.

Network Rail is replacing the track and the track bed through the 172-year-old Upholland tunnel to ensure it continues to provide safe and reliable journeys for years to come.

The length and location of the tunnel means that in order to carry out the work safely, the line will be closed to trains over three weekends in March 2020.

A bus replacement service will be in operation for passengers between Kirkby and Wigan Wallgate over three consecutive Saturdays: Saturday 14 March, Saturday 21 March, and Saturday 28 March.

Rosie Cooper, MP for West Lancashire, said: “Although unfortunately there will be some disruption to passengers for three Saturdays, I welcome the £1m investment by Network Rail ensuring the track through Upholland Tunnel remains safe and reliable for trains for decades to come.

“There will be replacement bus services for passengers while these works are ongoing.

“I would recommend that passengers wishing to travel on the Kirkby branch line in late March to check [nationalrail.co.uk](http://nationalrail.co.uk) before they travel.”

Howard Kernahan, project manager at Network Rail, said: “We know there’s never a good time to close the railway and we apologise for the disruption this work will mean for passengers in West Lancashire.

“This vital work will mean fewer delays on the line from Wigan to Kirkby and make this Victorian-built structure fit for a 21st-century railway.

“We urge people to check before they travel these three Saturdays while this upgrade takes place as part of the Great North Rail Project.”

Chris Jackson, Regional Director at Northern, said: “The weekend closures will cause some disruption for our passengers, but the long-term benefits are vitally important.

“The new track will future-proof Northern services and the journeys of our passengers and will enable more comfortable and reliable journeys for years to come.”

On Saturdays, during the engineering work, hourly buses will operate locally between Wigan Wallgate and Kirkby, calling at all stations in between.

The tunnel was built in 1848 and takes in 887 metres of the Kirkby branch line underneath the village of Upholland.

It’s located at the highest point of the line and is the only major structure on the route between Wigan Wallgate and Kirkby.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*