

Vital East Suffolk Line embankment work starts this week

March 21, 2023



Network Rail will be working to stabilise and widen a mile-long embankment on the railway to the north of Martlesham, on the East Suffolk Line from this Saturday until Thursday, April 6.

There will be no direct trains between Ipswich and Lowestoft throughout these 13 consecutive days, with rail replacement buses operating between Ipswich and Saxmundham.

Passengers are being advised to check before they travel and to look out for further changes to services on 30 March and 1 April, when there is planned industrial action.

Saxmundham station's car park will be closed during the works because it is being used for rail replacement buses.

The engineering work is needed because the top of the embankment is slipping away. This means that important signalling equipment and signage is gradually falling down the bank, potentially affecting the future safe and reliable running of the line.

There is also currently no walkway for railway workers along the embankment, meaning that access to carry out essential maintenance is severely limited. The widening work will provide enough space for a new walkway.

Finally, the improvements need to be completed before a mile of worn-out track on top of the embankment can be replaced.

Network Rail will be back to carry out this track work between 16-25 August, when buses will replace trains for 10 consecutive days. Renewing worn-out track is essential to minimising faults and delays.

Mark Walker, Network Rail Anglia route infrastructure engineer, said: "I'm really sorry that passengers will face extended stretches of bus replacement. However, the major work on this steep, high embankment is vital to help keep trains on time and avoid sudden disruption or closures. We are building an East Suffolk Line that is fit for the future."

Jamie Burles, Greater Anglia managing director, said: "This improvement work will help ensure we can continue to operate a punctual train service along the East Suffolk Line. Our new trains are already providing a very good service on the route and this engineering work will help ensure we can continue to deliver high standards of performance on a consistent basis and provide a more comfortable journey for passengers.

"A rail replacement bus service will run between Ipswich and Saxmundham between 25 March and 6 April so customers can complete their journeys. We would advise everyone to check before they travel and allow more time for their journey. We would like to thank customers for their patience while this work is carried out."

In addition to the embankment stabilisation and widening, engineers will carry out the main work to renew the surfaces of two level crossings in Woodbridge on 25 and 26 March. This follows the completion of upgrades on three other nearby crossings, making them easier and safer to use for pedestrians, cyclists and drivers.