

# Vital upgrades to the railway between Portsmouth and Fareham completed as railway reopens to customers

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**Network Rail** has reopened the railway between Portsmouth and Fareham after a week of upgrade work to replace track and upgrade signalling systems.

South Western Railway (SWR), Great Western Railway (GWR) and Southern trains between Southampton Central and Havant, Eastleigh and Portsmouth Harbour and Southampton Central and Portsmouth Harbour are now operating as normal following a five-day closure over the February half term.

Between Monday 12 and Friday 16 February, Network Rail's engineers worked around the clock to upgrade the railway.

At Portsmouth Harbour station, engineers renewed 1,094 metres of track across four platforms at the station. The work involved replacing jointed rails, examining rails, fixing baseplates to track and installing sleepers which have extended the life expectancy of the track for a further 20 years, meaning less

disruptive maintenance will be needed.

While the railway in Portsmouth was closed, engineers also refurbished 592m of rail at Vernon Bridge. The work involved replacing jointed rails as well as renewing 'wheel timbers' – the heavy wooden blocks that support the track on Portsmouth's iconic Landport viaduct.

In the Fareham area, engineers replaced sleepers and ballast (track stones) as well as renewing 600m of jointed curved rail to provide customers with smoother journeys.

Engineers also continued upgrading the signalling system between St Denys and Swanwick as part of the wider Southampton Area Life Extension programme, which will see over 12,000m of signalling cables installed to bring the system up to modern standards, extending its life by a further 50 years, meaning fewer faults and delays.

Work also included upgrades to switches and crossings (sections of track that help trains move from one side to another) as well as the clearance of trees and shrubs.

Jeff Rose, Network Rail's blockade programme manager, said: "We know that this closure has been inconvenient for passengers, especially as we recently had to complete emergency works to prevent a landslide at Fareham, but we're pleased that we've been able to reopen this part of the railway on time. The decision to close the railway is never taken lightly, but by choosing the February half term we've minimised disruption to as many people as possible.

"These vital upgrade works have been essential to maintaining and improving railway reliability in the Portsmouth and Fareham areas and will help keep the railway safe. Having completed these works now, our customers will benefit for years to come. We'd like to thank them for their patience while we got on with the job."

Peter Williams, South Western Railway's Customer and Commercial Director, said: "We'd like to thank our customers for their patience during this week's line closures. The lines between Southampton Central, Fareham and Portsmouth Harbour are important local links for the south of Hampshire, and we look forward to the improved reliability that these improvements will bring."

Jenny Saunders, Govia Thameslink Railway's customer services director, said: "It's good news that track has been renewed because it should give our customers smoother, more reliable journeys. We worked hard to keep people moving but the disruption was significant and I'd like to thank everyone for their patience."

*Photo credit: Network Rail*