

Work continues on major Victoria-Croydon line improvements over Christmas

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Network Rail has said that work on a major £160m upgrade is continuing over the Christmas period.

Improvements are being carried out on the London Victoria to East Croydon route to replace worn-out 1970s signalling on the line – from London Victoria as far as Balham and Streatham Hill. In all, 90 new signals will be put in place, new train detection installed and control moved to the centre at Three Bridges.

A major part of that work will take place from Saturday 25 December to Monday 3 January 2022, when no trains will run between East Croydon and London Victoria, with most trains diverted to London Bridge.

During the 10-day closure, Pouparts Junction, a stretch of railway near Battersea, will be rebuilt entirely, and signal gantries to house the signalling equipment, cables routes and power supply points will be installed along the lines from Balham to London Victoria.

By doing the work in blockades Network Rail says it can avoid the alternative of a long series of weekend or bank holiday closures over several years.

Katie Frost, Sussex route director, Network Rail, said: “Nine days is a long time to close a main line railway and I know that a lot of people will be asking why we’ve got to do this now. The truth is that with fewer people travelling during the festive period this is still the best way for us to do large-scale improvements and if we had to do this work at weekends, we would be closing the railway far more often and disrupting far more people.

“So I’d like to thank our passengers and neighbours for their patience with us, and urge people who are travelling over the festive season to plan their journeys before they leave.

“This project will have a huge impact on the reliability of the railway for years to come and it will be worth the wait.”

Chris Fowler, customer services director for Southern, said: “These engineering programmes are essential to give our customers the reliable, on-time services they rightly expect. We’re working closely with Network Rail and other transport partners to ensure our customers can get where they need to be when services are affected. Some journeys will take considerably longer than normal, so please check routes and times in advance.”