

Work going ahead to prepare railway for Commonwealth Games

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Network Rail has said that the Chiltern main line between Dorridge and Birmingham Moor Street will be shut for four days while work continues to improve the railway ahead of the Commonwealth Games.

The infrastructure owner says that parts of the railway will be replaced between Monday 20 and Thursday 23 June as part of a £3m project.

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The work will overhaul the switches and crossings allowing trains to access and leave a critical train maintenance depot at Tyseley in Birmingham.

The depot is an important site for three train operators - West Midlands Railway, CrossCountry and Chiltern Railways.

Any issues there during the Commonwealth Games could cause delays across the region, including risking overcrowding at key stations serving sports venues.

Replacing the complex equipment now will help train services run smoothly during this summer's Games, which are expected to see more than one million extra passenger journeys across the West Midlands rail network.

The essential upgrades will impact the following routes and services between Monday 20 and Thursday 23 June:

- On the Shakespeare line to Stratford-upon-Avon, there will be no trains between Birmingham Moor Street and Spring Road stations
- On the Chiltern main line between London Marylebone and Birmingham, there will be no trains between Birmingham Moor Street and Dorridge

The four-day railway closure has been extended to Dorridge from Solihull – this allows better flexibility for the trains which will be running on the rest of the Chiltern main line.

Rail replacement buses will be in operation and people are advised to plan ahead at www.nationalrail.co.uk.

Denise Wetton, Network Rail's Central route director, said: "There's never an ideal time to shut the railway and a mid-week closure for work like this is rare, but after carefully reviewing recent passenger numbers on this route we've found it's the least disruptive time to make these essential improvements.

"These upgrades will benefit journeys across the wider West Midlands, providing passengers with an efficient, cleaner and more reliable railway throughout our major summer of sport. It will also help to reduce the risk of platforms becoming overcrowded as a result of the predicted one million extra passenger journeys during the Commonwealth Games."

Eleni Jordan, commercial & customer strategy director for Chiltern Railways, said: "Network Rail's crucial track replacement work between Monday 20 and Thursday 23 June will ensure that we can continue to provide a safe and reliable service for our customers across what is expected to be a busy summer on the railways in the West Midlands.

"We will be regularly communicating plans for rail replacement transport in and out of Birmingham. We advise that customers travelling during the closure check their journey on the Chiltern website or app before travelling."

Jonny Wiseman, West Midlands Trains customer experience director, said: "These essential works will make a real, long-term difference to passengers by improving access to Tyseley depot where trains are maintained, repaired and refuelled.

"I would like to thank our customers for their patience while this work is carried out and I urge passengers travelling during this period to plan their journeys carefully as revised timetables and rail replacement

buses will be in operation.”

Engineers and planners will make the most of the four-day railway closure to carry out a host of other work, including:

- Installing new rails, sleepers and ballast (railway foundation stone)
- Stressing rails to cope better with hot weather
- Removing overgrown plants and graffiti
- Carrying out a deep clean of Birmingham Moor Street station itself

Doing this work further reduces future disruption to passengers and provides a more reliable rail network not only during the Games but for many years to come.

It will also save millions of pounds of taxpayers’ money as doing this work outside of a full railway closure would normally take place over multiple weekends over an entire summer.

Passengers are being advised to check before they travel at www.nationalrail.co.uk.