

# Work underway to give Chatham's historic Luton Arches railway bridge a facelift

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Work has started to clean and repair a well-known railway bridge in Chatham.

The 1858-built underbridge, part of the Luton Arches, carries the London to Ramsgate main line over the steep valley leading towards the village of Luton, now part of the wider Chatham area.

The red and green cast iron arch is seen by thousands of people every day on their way in and out of the town on the A2 road.

After a long life in service, the bridge now needs refurbishment to make sure it can continue to carry trains and passengers for another 160 years, as well as maintain its place as an admired landmark in the town of Chatham.

Due to complete by the end of March, the works involve cleaning, masonry repairs, pigeon proofing, installing new plates under the railway to improve the track quality and painting the bridge.

The work has been planned for a while in liaison with Medway Council, local businesses and the Arches

Local group with whom Network Rail recently worked in installing a mural on the bridge by the renowned artist Lionel Stanhope.

Although the structure is supported by three steel girders, the original cast iron arch girders were left in place for decorative purposes.

Fiona Taylor, route director for Network Rail Kent, said: "We will be treating this historic bridge with the utmost care, restoring it to its past glory as an admired landmark in Chatham and making sure it remains safe and reliable for trains in the coming decades.

"Regrettably, due to the nature of the work, nearby residents may experience some disturbance but we will keep that to a minimum by working during daylight hours.

"We've been in close touch with local businesses and Medway Council in planning our works and I'd like to thank the Arches Local community group for their hard work and commitment in supporting this project."

Arches Local's Stephen Perez, said: "We're really pleased Network Rail is carrying out this restoration work on a really important gateway to our town. We've been working with Network Rail on the Arches for a long time and, together with the recently completed mural, we hope this work will be the continuation of what has become a real catalyst for change in the area."

The works will take place on weekdays from 7am to 5.30pm, however, there may be a need for occasional weekend working.

In the week commencing 13 March, there will be overnight road closures while the scaffolding from the bridge is removed to restore the carriageway to two lanes.

*Photo credit: Network Rail – Luton Arches*