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£10m works to upgrade rail network

by Sean McPolin

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Passengers are being reminded to prepare for vital works at Kent's busiest railway junction.

During the February half-term, £10million is being poured into track upgrades at Dartford Junction and will affect travel around the county.

Between Saturday, February 14, and Sunday, February 22, station improvements will also be undertaken to "take advantage of the line closure".

For those affected, buses will replace Southeastern and Thameslink services between Gravesend and Dartford towards Crayford, Barnehurst, and Slade Green.

Passengers are advised to allow extra time for their journeys, especially during peak hours when there could be queues for the replacement buses.

No Thameslink services will operate between Plumstead and Gravesend. An hourly Thameslink shuttle train service will run between Gravesend and Rainham.

All Southeastern metro routes continue as normal into London via Sidcup, Bexleyheath and Woolwich lines but times will change. There will be extra services on the Bexleyheath line.

High-speed services to and from St Pancras via Gravesend will continue to operate as normal.

Buses will replace trains at Dartford, Stone Crossing, Greenhithe for Bluewater, Swanscombe and Northfleet.

Network Rail has warned that replacement buses may be busy, and customers are asked to allow extra time for their journey.

The replacement services will run between Gravesend and Slade Green calling at Northfleet, Swanscombe, Greenhithe, Stone Crossing and Dartford.

They will also run between Dartford and Crayford, between Dartford and Barnehurst and between Dartford and Slade Green.

The company believes the multi-million-pound upgrades will improve reliability and performance of the busiest railway junction in Kent.

Upgrades include the renewal of 10 switches and crossings, also known as points – the moveable sections of track that allow trains to change direction – and around 400 yards of new rail will be laid between Slade Green and Dartford.

At Stone Crossing station, damaged fencing will be replaced, while at Greenhithe, the accessible toilet will be refurbished.

Deep cleaning will take place at Swanscombe, and new LED lighting and additional customer information screens to aid journey planning will be installed at Northfleet. Repainting will take place at all of the stations closed for the duration of the work.

While the main upgrade of the junction is scheduled to take place during the nine-day closure between February 14 and 22, there will also be additional weekend closures on Saturday,

February 7 and Sunday, February 8 for preparation work and then follow-up work on Sunday, March 1 and Sunday, April 5.

A replacement bus service will be running on these dates.

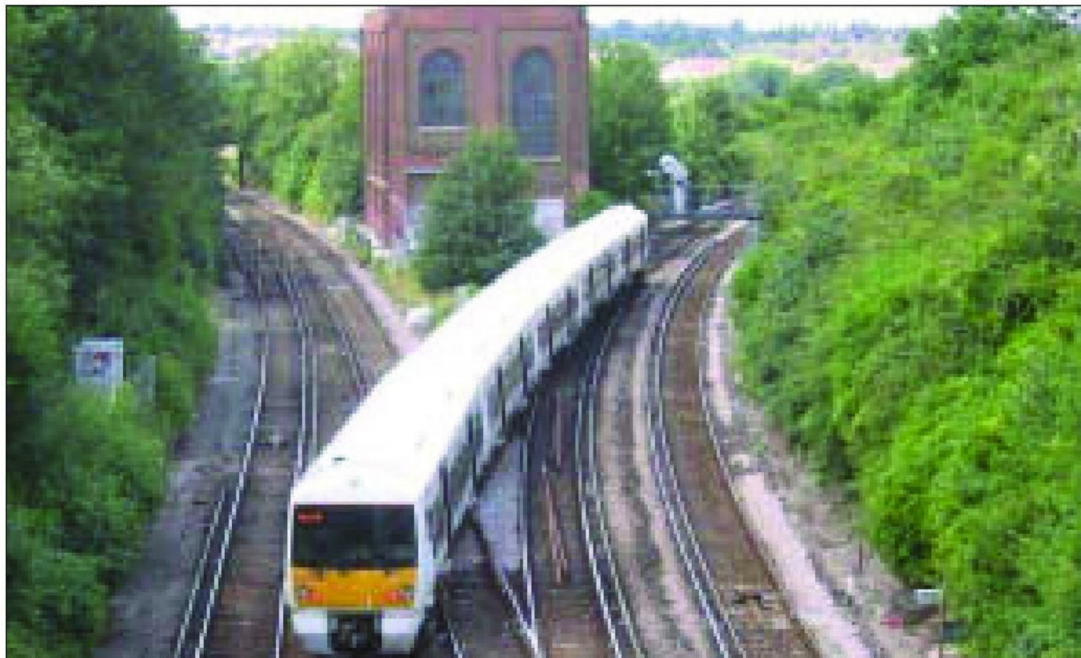
South Eastern Railway's chief operating officer David Davidson said: "The work at Dartford Junction, where 650 trains pass every day, is a vital investment in the long-term resilience and efficiency of one of the busiest junctions of our network. We want to thank customers for their patience while we carry out this essential upgrade.

"We've deliberately chosen the half-term to minimise disruption as schools are on holiday and fewer people are commuting. We will be making the most of the time available when trains are not running to carry out station refurbishments, including installing tactile paving at Dartford station to improve accessibility and safety.

"We understand that this will be disruptive and we're working hard to ensure passengers are fully informed about the closure so that they can make their alternative travel arrangements.

"By doing the work over the February half-term, we can fit everything we need to do into one nine-day closure. The alternative would be up to 30 weekends, which would be much more disruptive over a longer period."

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Major works are planned for Dartford railway junction in February

Picture: [Network Rail](#)