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Major upgrades to affect rail services over half term

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RAIL passengers are being advised to plan ahead, in advance of rail engineering works in the Dartford area over the February half term.

Network Rail has announced a series of major rail upgrades taking place at Dartford Junction in Kent, with disruption expected for passengers travelling across parts of south east London and north Kent.

The junction is the busiest in Kent, with around 650 trains passing through every day, and the works have been described as a "vital" project to improve the reliability of journeys between London and Kent.

Rail engineers will be carrying out a £10 million track upgrade at Dartford Junction to improve the reliability and performance of the network.

The work includes renewing 10 switches and crossings, also known as points, which allow trains to change direction, as well as laying around 400 yards of new rail between Slade Green

and Dartford.

Alongside the track upgrades, a programme of station improvements will also be carried out while the railway is closed.

The main work will take place during a nine-day closure from Saturday February 14 to Sunday, February 22, coinciding with the school half-term in a bid to reduce disruption.

During this period, **Southeastern** and **Thameslink** services will not operate through Dartford on certain routes, with replacement bus services running instead.

There will also be additional weekend closures on Saturday, February 7 and Sunday, February 8 for preparation work, followed by further closures on Sunday, March 1 and Sunday, April 5 to complete follow-up work.

Network Rail has confirmed that replacement buses will also run on these dates.

During the February half-term works, passengers will see significant changes to services running through Dartford.

From February 14 to February 22, accessible replacement buses will run between Gravesend and Dartford, connecting passengers with Crayford, Barnehurst and

Slade Green. Train services into London will operate as normal via the Sidcup, Bexleyheath and Woolwich lines, however passengers are being warned to expect timetable changes and to check before travelling.

At Dartford station, new tactile paving will be installed to improve accessibility and reduce the stepping distance between platforms and trains.

At Stone Crossing, damaged fencing will be replaced, while Greenhithe's accessible toilet will be refurbished.

Swanscombe station will undergo a deep clean, and new LED lighting and additional customer information screens will be implemented at Northfleet.

Network Rail also confirmed that all stations affected by the closure will also be repainted.

David Davidson, chief operating officer for Southeastern Railway, 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'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."



Rail passengers are being advised to plan ahead

Image: Network Rail