

# Major stations to close for more than three weeks

By EZEKIEL BERTRAND

ezeziel.bertrand@newsquest.co.uk

TWO major central London train stations for south London commuters will be closed for more than three weeks this summer while engineers carry out £20 million of essential upgrades.

The line between London Charing Cross and Waterloo East will shut from July 26 to August 16 as part of a major Network Rail programme of works.

During the 22-day closure, no trains will call at either station, with services that normally run into Charing Cross diverted to other London terminals.

Southeastern trains will instead run to London Victoria, London Cannon Street and London Blackfriars, while some services will terminate at London Bridge station.

Ticket acceptance will be in place on alternative rail routes, London Underground services and buses while the work is carried out.

The closure will allow engineers to replace around 1,800 metres of



Charing Cross station. Image: PA

track and switches and crossings on the approach to Charing Cross, infrastructure which Network Rail says has reached the end of its working life.

The track was last renewed in the early 1990s and recent faults have caused more than 21,000 minutes of delays to passengers.

Drainage improvements will also be carried out at Waterloo East station as part of the project.

Structural repairs will take place on Hungerford Bridge, which carries the railway over the River Thames, as well as on the pedestrian link bridge between Waterloo East and London Waterloo.

Network Rail says additional work will be completed during the closure where possible to avoid the need for further disruption in future.

Engineers considered several options for delivering the upgrades, including weekend-only closures and multiple shorter shutdowns, but said these would have caused repeated disruption over many months.

A weekend-only approach would have required around 60 closures spread over more than a year, while several shorter blockades would have needed to take place over 10 to 16 months.

Network Rail said carrying out the work in one continuous period during the summer, when commuting levels are lower and schools are closed, is the least disruptive option overall.

Some preparatory and follow-up work will also take place on nearby weekends before and after the main closure.