

**Subject:** A joint update on the winter timetable

**From:** Govia Thameslink Railway >

**Date:** 22/11/2018 10:21

**To:** >



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## Update from Govia Thameslink Railway and Network Rail

22 November 2018

We wrote to you a few weeks ago to give you an update about 200 additional services being introduced to the current weekday timetable this winter. This is a further update with more detail about our expectations for this winter and the specific work being jointly undertaken to ensure we are ready to bring additional trains into service, bringing our total up to 3,600 trains running every weekday.

December is traditionally a busy month across the transport network. Network Rail will continue to focus on upgrading our aging infrastructure through predominately weekend engineering works during the month. This December this means there will be more extensive and longer lasting engineering work in and out of Victoria, Kentish Town and the Brighton Main Line, in addition to the ongoing planned weekend engineering work.

Customers will see several timetable revisions in December and January, due to a combination of planned engineering work and a bedding in period for the winter timetable.

- Final critical maintenance checks will be undertaken in the Thameslink Core, prior to the launch of the new timetable. In parallel, GTR will be working hard to ensure that all trains are in the correct position to provide an effective start on Monday 10<sup>th</sup>.
- In addition, over the festive period, Network Rail will be undertaking engineering work with blockades in the Victoria area and Kentish Town, starting on 23 December. This means that the winter timetable will be in operation for two weeks before Christmas (10 to 14 December and 17 to 21 December) and will then resume fully in the New Year on Monday 7 January. These two weeks are framed by large scale planned engineering work, as follows:
  - A revised weekend timetable will operate on 15 and 16 December, due to planned engineering work at Victoria. In addition, there will be no services through Lewes on the Sunday and various other planned engineering work on the Southern network.
  - A revised weekend timetable will also operate on 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> January due to planned work between Three Bridges & Brighton (Sunday), No service Peterborough & Sandy, No service between Hurst Green & Uckfield (Sunday)

The full benefits of the timetable will then become apparent once we have had a bedding-in period which includes some service alterations until the end of the holiday period on Monday 7 January. Travel may of course be impacted by bad winter weather, but if necessary we have winter contingency plans in place and improving winter resilience in our infrastructure.

We have learned a number of lessons from May including the need to provide better advice to

passengers when there are circumstances affecting them, and as a result we have allocated extra resources to ensure we provide quality and timely information to passengers. To aid the deployment of fast information, GTR is rolling out 2000 new smart phones (loaded with the best information apps available) to station and on-board staff so they can respond quickly to customer enquiries. We will also have volunteers from both organisations supporting station teams to assist passengers.

We are in the final stages of completing three new driver depots, (Hornsey, Cricklewood and Welwyn Garden City) and completing the move of one in five of our drivers (over 200) from current depots to the new ones to better match work requirements. For example, we moved our staff to a new depot in Luton this week, which has much better facilities. GTR has been training more drivers since May 2018 and now have just under 2,000 drivers in total across the whole of GTR, ready for the introduction of the additional services.

We have also ensured that our operational colleagues are well briefed and well resourced. We have brought in additional systems, processes and people at our Rail Operating Centre in Three Bridges and across stations to deal with potential incidents and to provide information for frontline staff to answer passenger queries.

We are now doing some final work to test the winter timetable plans. As soon as we have concluded this work, we will update you so you have the latest information.

Network Rail is working hard to ensure that our region's infrastructure is able to support an enhanced train service. As the south end of the Brighton mainline (around Balcombe) has been the single area with the most infrastructure incidents, this has been a priority this year. To date, the following has been achieved:

- **Balcombe Tunnel Junction** – 13 panels of the new Switches and Crossings layout (the specially machined rails designed to permit trains to transfer between tracks) were delivered to site; All the new switch panels have been built and moved into a stacking area alongside the layout in readiness for February 2019. Once installed, it makes it easier for the trains to cross over to an alternative track.
- **Balcombe Station to Copyhold Junction** – 2.3 miles of conductor rail were renewed. Conductor rail is the rail through which electricity is supplied to electric trains operating on the third rail system; over 1000 yards of ballast on the Down Line has been cleaned
- **Balcombe Tunnel & Haywards Heath** - High Output Ballast Cleaning. Ballast is the aggregate stone, gravel, or cinders forming the track bed on which sleepers (ties) and track are laid to ensure stability and proper drainage.
- **Clayton Tunnel** – enabling works for the forthcoming track renewals were completed consisting of securing 1400 yards of cable route and clearing 1000 yards of scrap rail; lighting and ventilation system installed in preparation for this weekend's renewal; track circuit commissioning; track renewal undertaken
- **Cooksbridge** – re-railing completed
- **Gatwick Airport and Keymar Junction to Plumpton**– signal head changes
- **Haywards Heath Station** – four signal heads were converted to LED and signalling power upgrades; rerailling in Haywards Heath Tunnel, 30 wet beds dug out, repeat rough ride locations treated; Conductor Rail Renewal and signal changes at Haywards Heath; conductor rail installation completed along the Ouse Valley area and signal changes completed
- **Keymer Junction area** – rerailling through Keymer level crossing as well as the removal of numerous rail defects and removal of wetbeds in Wivelsfield station
- **Patcham to Preston Park** - Signalling installation
- **Preston Park** – improved track formation on platform 2 and commissioned 3 track disconnectors to replace hook switches.
- **Streat Green** (Plumpton Racecourse) – Underbridge renewed
- **Three Bridges** two signal heads were changed, enabling works for future signalling upgrades undertake and upgrades to the signalling power system; track circuits replaced.
- **Wivesfield/Haywards Heath** – 2 signals and a banner converted to LED operation; ballast cleaning.

We are continuing our work to plan for the 10<sup>th</sup>, with cross checking and validation exercises underway, as per the current industry planning process. Industry planning processes mean we have to publish timetables four weeks in advance of introduction. As you know, our initial wave of customer information has been rolled out to provide passengers with as much notice as possible, as such PDFs of the winter timetable are available online and Journey Planners have been updated with the 3600 trains.

Now that we have some more information we have made a few tweaks to some off peak services for the first four weeks. These will be flagged in Journey Planners so that they are still accurate. Should there be any further changes to our current plans, we would of course make sure you are advised immediately. We continue to recommend that passengers check before they travel, and encourage them to use the National Rail app for live departure updates and timetable information.

As always, if you require any further information, please contact us through your normal contact or email [gtr.stakeholders@gtrailway.com](mailto:gtr.stakeholders@gtrailway.com).

Yours sincerely

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