

Thank you for your patience and understanding during a packed year of rail improvement work.

2018 has seen more line closures and diversions for infrastructure improvements than at any time since the line was built. Next year will see a significant reduction in work as Network Rail switch to maintenance and resilience work.

There are, however, some 2019 projects that will impact on journeys in the South West, some of which start in early January and I thought it would be helpful to alert you to them now.

Details of all work planned are on our dedicated South West upgrade web page <https://www.gwr.com/travel-updates/planned-engineering/SWupgrade>. This includes a journey planner to check changes for specific dates and journeys.

There will be track renewal work on:

- Weekends of 6/7 and 13/14 January and 2/3 and 9/10 February between Crediton and Barnstaple
- Sunday 20, 27 January and 17 February between Newton Abbot and Plymouth
- Weekend of 9/10 February between Truro and Penzance including the St Ives branch

This will be followed by extensive tunnel maintenance work at Whiteball Tunnel (near Tiverton Parkway) and Marley Tunnel (near Totnes) between 18 February and 8 March 2019. This will safeguard their use for the years ahead. One line will remain open at Marley allowing a limited service. Whiteball Tunnel however will be fully closed throughout, and trains will operate on a diversionary route.

Full details are on the South West upgrade webpage above, but in summary the main changes to the timetable will be:

- One train almost every two hours between London Paddington and Plymouth via Honiton
- Coach services between Taunton and Exeter St Davids connecting with trains from Taunton to London Paddington, Bristol and South Wales
- A reduced train service between Exeter St Davids and Plymouth
- A regular shuttle train service between Plymouth and Penzance
- Minor retimings on branch lines with some services running earlier than normal

Journey times will be extended, and we recommend that you check before travel.

As well as the infrastructure work, we will continue to roll out our new Intercity Express Trains on routes to the South West. The work to improve track and train will mean greater capacity and together gives us the opportunity to plan for faster, more frequent services. Getting there is not pain free, and we recognise that performance has not been at the standard that you and I expect of late. I apologise for this. We

are working hard on improvements and while they will be disruptive the track renewals and the tunnel maintenance will mean fewer disruptions in future.

If you would like more information on this, or on the work we are doing with Network Rail to improve performance, please let me know and we will be happy to help.

With best wishes for the season

Mark

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