

Embargo: 10:00 Thursday 11 July 2024

Oxford's major rail and road improvement project is progressing but more time is needed before Botley Road can reopen

Network Rail has confirmed that significant progress is being made on the multi-million-pound programme to upgrade Oxford Station, enhance the railway infrastructure in the area and improve the local transport network, however more time is required to complete the highly complex utility diversion works including mains water and sewer pipes under Botley Road.

The replacement of the railway bridge, which was scheduled to take place at end of this month, has been postponed as, despite concerted effort by all organisations involved, the work to divert the complex layout of utility pipes and cables under the road, including the sewer system, cannot be completed in time. Unfortunately as a result Botley Road, which has been closed under the rail bridge since April 2023, will not now reopen in October as planned. Network Rail and its contractor, Kier, are working with the local authorities to agree the best way forward to complete the project and minimise impact on the city.

Anna Holbrook, Industry Programme Director at Network Rail said: "Although our work is progressing well on most aspects of this major programme, including the construction of the new platform on the western side of the station, the bridge replacement has unfortunately had to be postponed as the work to divert the complex layout of utility pipes and cables under the road, including the sewer system, will not be ready in time. We have informed the councils that Botley Road will not now be able to be reopened in October. We know how important Botley Road is to Oxford and apologise to local residents and businesses for the ongoing inconvenience. We are working out the best way forward and will continue to engage with the local community as our plans develop."

Kier and the 11 different utility providers involved continue to make progress on diverting the large number of pipes and cables, including the water main and sewer, which need to be completed before the bridge can be replaced. Working on this outdated maze of pipes and cables spread out below the highway, in a severely constrained space, with poor ground conditions and significant water levels, continues to make this work very challenging.

Once fully complete, the upgrades will result in a bigger and better station, more rail services for passengers and an improved road network near Oxford station with safer junctions, and more space for cyclists and pedestrians through the addition of a four-metre cycle/footway on each side of the main road.

Notes to editors

Passenger information:

- The planned closure of rail lines through Oxford at the end of July will now only be for two days – Saturday 27 and Sunday 28. During this time there will be work taking place on the new platform and continuation of the resignalling programme. There will also be an upgrade to tracks to the south of Oxford near Culham.
- Over that weekend, there will be no train services between Didcot and Oxford, with a Rail Replacement Service operating from Becket Street car park.

- There is additional work to the north of Oxford, which will affect train services between Oxford and Banbury, between Saturday 27 and Wednesday 31 July.

Summary of progress on utility diversion work:

- Gas main – Installation of pipework completed prior to connection work by SGN
- Water main – Installation of pipework underway
- Telecommunications – Shared utility trench through Frideswide Square and Becket Street car park completed. Openreach currently installing cables below the rail bridge area, with Vodafone, Virgin and Oxford University to follow
- Sewer – Work has started on the diversion through Becket Street car park

Summary of progress on wider project:

- New platform – Work is underway on the foundations for the new platform, starting with ground supports that will hold the canopy in place for platforms 4 and 5
- Sheepwash bridge – Relocation of children's nursery into temporary building in Becket Street car park completed. Former building demolished, now tackling foundations
- Osney Lane footbridge – Relocation of the pillar to make space for new track completed last summer
- Track work – Installation of new high speed crossovers to the north of Oxford station and start of track for the new platform completed last summer
- Resignalling – Started last summer and currently ongoing