

MEDIA STATEMENT

January to June 2017: Network Rail Track Renewal on the Wirral Loop

Over the course of the first six months of 2017, Network Rail will carry out essential renewal work on the city centre underground sections of the Wirral line. This means that Wirral line trains will not be able to serve Moorfields, Lime Street and Liverpool Central stations. At certain times, trains towards Liverpool will be unable to travel beyond Birkenhead Central and Birkenhead North.

Northern line services will remain unaffected throughout and will call at Moorfields and Liverpool Central as normal.

The track in the underground 'loop', which forms the one way section of the Wirral line under Liverpool city centre, was built in the 1970s, and has been well maintained by Network Rail and its predecessors. But 40 years on, the concrete that supports the track in the single bore tunnels needs to be replaced. To minimise disruption, Network Rail is also taking the opportunity to replace the track under the riverbed between James Street and Hamilton Square at the same time.

When the work is finished, passengers will be assured that the railway infrastructure is reliable for the next decades of intensive use by our train services.

Merseyrail, working with local transport authority Merseytravel, will do everything possible to ensure that Wirral line passengers can continue to travel into Liverpool city centre, using alternative transport, such as replacement bus services and Mersey Ferry services. Over the next few months, we will be refining our plans and communicating information on travel options to our customers.

Notes to Editors:

- *110,000 passenger journeys are made on Merseyrail each weekday*
- *Merseyrail scores for reliability and punctuality averaged over 95 per cent during the last 12 months*
- *We operate one of the most intensively used networks in the UK with more than 800 trains per weekday*
- *Merseyrail is a 50-50 joint venture between Serco and Abellio*
- *Merseytravel is the transport executive body and delivery arm of the city region's Combined Authority*
- *Network Rail is the owner and operator of most of the rail infrastructure in the UK*
- *For further information, contact Alice Owen on tel 0151 955 2131.*

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The work will be carried out in three phases, starting in early January 2017.

Phase 1

From Tuesday 3 January 2017 till Sunday 12 February 2017, there will be no Wirral line trains beyond Birkenhead Central and Birkenhead North towards Liverpool.

Phase 2

From Monday 13 February 2017 till Monday 29 May 2017, Wirral line trains will run as far as James Street on weekdays. At the weekends, trains will run only as far as Birkenhead North and Birkenhead Central, as in phase 1. However, on bank holidays weekends, and the Saturday of the Grand National, they will run to James Street.

Phase 3

From Tuesday 30 May 2017 till Sunday 18 June 2017, there will again be no Wirral line trains beyond Birkenhead Central and Birkenhead North towards Liverpool.

Demand for Merseyrail services is higher in the summer than in the winter, and while we understand there is never a good time to carry out this sort of work, the dates have been chosen to affect the minimum number of journeys possible. By undertaking all the work in one go, Network Rail can complete the track renewals quicker, and avoid a situation where time is wasted moving heavy machinery into and out of the narrow city centre tunnels.

Jan Chaudhry-van der Velde, Merseyrail's managing director, commented: 'The work that Network Rail will undertake next year is essential for maintaining the safe and reliable operation of the infrastructure built in the 1970s, however we do not under-estimate the inconvenience this will cause to our Wirral line passengers in the short term. This renewal work forms part of a much bigger programme of investment in the rail system across the region throughout 2017 and 2018. During the next few months, we will work with Merseytravel to finalise the alternative travel arrangements, including the extensive rail replacement bus service that will be required when the river bed tunnel is closed.'

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