

Steventon Bridge Communications Update Temporary solution

Summary

As part of our Railway Upgrade Plan, we are committed to completing the electrification of the railway from London Paddington to Cardiff. This is one of Britain's oldest and busiest railways.

Our work will enable GWR to introduce services linking the two capitals on brand new Intercity Express Trains; replacing 1970s trains. The new IETs are quieter, greener, more reliable and offer higher capacity. This benefits passengers, railway neighbours and the environment.

Electrification will not only improve efficiency but also capacity to meet demand which has increased by 129.8 % since privatisation in 1994–95. The new IEP trains will provide at least 15% extra capacity across day and evening peaks and improve journey times.

The works required to electrify the railway are significant. This includes a requirement to modify a large number of bridges, viaducts, tunnels and stations, to accommodate the overhead electrification line equipment (OLE) and meet the required safety standards which apply to an electrified railway line. It is also necessary to install the OLE, which requires the regular spacing of masts to support the wires that carry the 25,000 volts, which are required to power the trains.

Until now, we have planned to carry out a full reconstruction of Steventon bridge to facilitate the required clearances for installation of the overhead line equipment. It is now clear that reconstruction will not be possible before the introduction of electric train services in 2018.

To enable electrification to proceed, a temporary solution must now be introduced at Steventon bridge (B4017) to enable us to deliver the electrified railway through Steventon. In advance of this, some preparatory work on the track underneath the bridge will begin at the end of November 2017. In the longer term, to enable the introduction of timetabled electric train services, the temporary solution will also require a speed restriction on the railway, to ensure the safe passage of trains through Steventon.

The requirement to demolish and rebuild the bridge does not change. However, it is anticipated that the reconstruction - subject to approval of the Listed Building Consent (LBC), will now be delivered as early as possible in Control Period 6 (CP6), which starts in April 2019.

Dialogue will continue with key stakeholders, including engagement with the public, to keep them informed. This will include a drop-in event, which will be coordinated with the support of Steventon Parish Council, amongst others.