

## Severn Estuary Resilience Programme update

March 2022

# Summer start for vital railway line project



We wanted to update you on progress with our plans to secure the future of the critical railway line that runs along the Severn Estuary between Gloucester and Newport.

As you may be aware, last September we announced a £25m investment to improve resilience of this vital transport link, which is becoming increasingly affected by climate change and extreme weather.

The line, which connects South Wales with the West Country, Midlands and north of England, has been devastated by five major landslips in the past two years alone. This has led to extended closures of the railway and temporary speed restrictions, delaying more than 200,000 trains.

As well as disrupting passengers, this also impacts essential freight services, with 43 freight trains passing through every week, moving steel, petrol, supermarket goods and construction materials.

Major work will start this summer to protect this historic stretch of railway, including the removal of more than 30,000 tonnes of material from the cliff face. A state-of-the-art mesh and bolt system will then be installed throughout the three miles of track, stabilising the cliff face and preventing landslips from affecting the track below.

### Seven-week closure plan to allow safe working

To carry out this vital work safely, we need to temporarily close the railway between Lydney and Gloucester for seven weeks from **Monday 18 July to Saturday 3 September 2022**. For the first two weeks, the closure will extend to Severn Tunnel Junction to allow essential track renewal work to take place near Chepstow from **Monday 18 July to Saturday 30 July**.

We will work with our train operator colleagues to keep our passengers moving during this period, which has been chosen to minimise the impact on schoolchildren travelling between Lydney and Gloucester.

Transport for Wales and CrossCountry are planning how rail services and replacement buses will operate during the closure and we will share the details with you as soon as they are finalised.

During parts of the closure, we will open the line at night to allow freight to run, helping supplies to reach their destination.

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### Preparation for major work is under way

Ahead of our programme this summer, emergency work to install soil nails and netting in a high-risk area of the cutting near Little Haglow is due to finish soon, while concrete blocks at the bottom of the cliffs act as a barrier at other locations.

Our work from July to September will focus on three miles of railway between Lydney and Gloucester, close to Purton, Etloe, Little Haglow and Awre in the Forest of Dean.

Ground investigation work has been completed and this month we are cutting back vegetation, in line with ecological restrictions.



Work is ongoing to stabilise the cutting at Little Haglow

### Looking to the future



Our work in 2022 will reduce the pressure on this three-mile stretch by removing more than 30,000 tonnes of material from the lower slope and replacing the existing mesh.

This will be followed in 2023 by soil nailing into the mesh system to retain the slope and

reduce weathering of high-risk areas. In 2024/25, we plan to continue the scheme into lower-risk areas.

In the meantime, we are monitoring and regularly inspecting areas at risk of landslips so that trains can safely continue to run with speed restrictions.

### Keep in touch

We're planning to hold community engagement events to keep our neighbours and passengers informed and we'll let you know dates nearer the time.

If you have any questions about our work, please call our National Helpline on 03457 11 41 41 or email communications manager Claire McGine at [claire.mcGINE@networkrail.co.uk](mailto:claire.mcGINE@networkrail.co.uk)

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