

Dawlish sea wall project nominated for two national awards

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Network Rail's new, bigger sea wall at Dawlish has been named as a finalist in not one, but two categories at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence 2021.

The completed first section of new sea wall, which will help protect the only railway line to the south west for the next 100 years, runs along Marine Parade west of Dawlish station and has been named as a finalist in the 'Excellence in Planning for a Successful Economy' and 'Excellence in Planning for the Natural Environment' categories.

The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence are the most established and respected awards in the UK planning industry. Running for over 40 years, they celebrate exceptional examples of planning and the contribution planners make to society.

Network Rail started construction on this first section of new sea wall in May 2019, [completing the work last July](#). The 360m stretch of new sea wall was [officially opened by the Rail Minister last September](#), giving the iconic stretch of railway line immediate greater resilience against waves that flood the track, leading to potential closures and delays.

This winter's stormy weather and associated rough sea conditions has demonstrated the new sea wall's effectiveness in protecting the railway and town from flooding, with the curved edges successfully deflecting waves back towards the sea and ensuring the railway has remained free from flooding.

Work on the second section of new sea wall between Dawlish station and the Coastguard breakwater east of the station **started last November** and is progressing well. This is expected to be completed by the start of 2023 and once finished will increase the resilience of the railway in the south west for at least the next 100 years and ensure communities remain connected via the railway network.

The new sea wall project at Dawlish is part of Network Rail's ongoing efforts since 2014 to improve the resilience of the railway between Dawlish and Teignmouth in Devon, known as the **South West Rail Resilience Programme**.

Colin Field, Network Rail town planning manager, said: "We are delighted to have been shortlisted for not one, but two categories of these prestigious RTPI awards.

"The design of this wall followed years of detailed studies, designs and joint working between world-leading marine, coastal and railway engineering experts, and it is so pleasing to see the new sea wall performing as we had hoped.

"It has been great that the first section of new sea wall has been so well received by the local community and most importantly will protect the town of Dawlish and increase the resilience of the railway for generations to come."

Teignbridge District Council Leader, Councillor Alan Connett, said: "Seven years ago Dawlish residents saw their homes and their lives under threat as the sea wall collapsed in the winter storms, taking with it the main railway link to the south west peninsular.

"This new sea defence scheme represents much more than just a feat in planning and construction; it will provide stability and reassurance for the many residents who have been at risk from the elements over the years. The new sea wall has already proved its worth throughout the stormy weather we've experienced this winter.

"It will also provide a more reliable and resilient transport link, and this will help attract inward investment to Teignbridge and beyond, as well as growing the local economy through encouraging more visitors to the area.

"Congratulations to Network Rail on being nominated for this prestigious award, and we wish them every success in the finals."

RTPI President Wei Yang FRTPi said: "Many congratulations to all the finalists at this year's RTPi Awards for Planning Excellence – these projects, teams and individuals showcase the very best of the planning profession from all the RTPi's regions and nations and from countries around the world.

"For over 40 years, these prestigious awards have celebrated the exceptional work undertaken by town

planners. In the middle of a global pandemic, I believe they are more relevant than ever before, recognising the incredible commitment and dedication of planners who have risen to the challenge of responding to the impacts of COVID-19 on the planning system.

“I wish all the finalists the very best of luck at the ceremony on 29 April.”

The virtual awards ceremony, where the winners will be announced, will take place at 4pm on Thursday 29 April.

For more information about the RTPI Awards, visit <https://www.rtpi.org.uk/events-training-and-awards/awards/rtpi-awards-for-planning-excellence/>

Photo credit: Network Rail