

Engineers finish West Coast main line signalling overhaul in Cheshire

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A key section of the signalling system on a busy stretch of the West Coast main line through Cheshire has had an overhaul.

Over the August bank holiday weekend Network Rail completed the once in a generation investment to signals between Prestbury, Macclesfield and Congleton.

The £45m project, which started in July 2021, has seen 56 signals upgraded and their control transferred to the state-of-the-art Manchester Rail Operating Centre.

The final switch over from the manually operated Macclesfield Signal Box saw the last lever pulled and train signalled through on Friday evening (26 August).

Signals are crucial for trains to run safely and on time and this work will improve future journeys on one of Europe's busiest mixed-use passenger and freight rail routes.

Ian Robinson, project manager for Network Rail, said: "This once in a generation overhaul of Macclesfield's

signalling system has brought this key section of the West Coast main line up to the most modern standards. The £45m investment will future proof journeys and create a more reliable railway for passengers and freight services.

"I would like to thank local people and passengers for their patience while we carried out this essential work to

Power sources and electrical cabling was also upgraded, as well as two structures carrying the 25,000-volt overhead lines which power trains, so drivers could see some of the new signals more clearly.

Gus Dunster, executive director of operations and safety at Avanti West Coast, said: "We're excited the upgrades to the signalling system are now complete and would like to thank customers for their patience and understanding while Network Rail carried out these works. Modernising the signals on a key section of our Manchester route is an important milestone for the railway and will help to make journeys on the West Coast main line more reliable for decades to come."

John Robson, CrossCountry's West Midlands and North West regional director, said: "Futureproofing this busy part of the West Coast main line has been essential to ensure a safer and more reliable railway. We'd like to thank our customers for being patient while this important modernisation took place."

Chris Jackson, regional director for Northern, said: "We welcome the completion of these works and the improvement to reliability they will bring for customers travelling on our Manchester Piccadilly to Stoke-on-Trent services.

"It is always important to invest in rail infrastructure to ensure we can keep the region moving, getting people from where they are, to where they want to be."

For more information on how Network Rail upgrades its signalling visit: www.networkrail.co.uk/running-the-railway/looking-after-the-railway/signalling/