

Government announces further funding to protect Dawlish coastal rail route

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A further £32m of funding to add vital netting and fencing along the Dawlish and Holcombe route, protecting passengers and safeguarding access to the network for local residents, has been announced by rail minister Wendy Morton.

This latest round of funding, which follows on from three earlier phases of work and takes the total to more than £150m, will prevent storm debris reaching the railway, creating strong resilient transport links to the area and giving passengers safer and more reliable journeys.

Following the devastating storms of 2014, which saw the railway damaged beyond use for eight weeks, the government intervened to prevent this from happening again by launching the [South West Rail Resilience Programme](#) (SWRRP). The SWRRP is a £155m commitment to create a more resilient railway, protect the safety of Dawlish's passengers and ensure that local communities are no longer at risk from being disconnected from the network for long periods of time.

Through this funding, the Government has successfully rebuilt the sea wall along the Marine Parade, added further cliff protection measures and implemented accessibility improvements.

Rail minister, Wendy Morton said: “Devon’s iconic sea wall, and the picturesque towns surrounding it, are jewels in the British crown, and we’re committed to protecting this vital line and the communities it serves.

“Through our wider £155m investment, we’re also working to boost connectivity and support the thriving local economy and tourism.”

The SWRRP £155m government investment includes:

- A £53m complete upgrade to the train care depot in Exeter improving service reliability and capacity for passengers across the region.
- £80m of funding to deliver a new sea wall at Dawlish, between Colonnades Bridge and Kennaway Tunnel, which opened in 2020 with the next phase of work to the east currently under construction.

Mike Gallop, Network Rail’s Western route director, said: “We are delighted to once again receive the support from government which enables us to carry out the next phase of our resilience work between Dawlish and Teignmouth.

“This will mean that passengers using GWR and CrossCountry services on this vital rail link to and from the South West will have more reliable journeys as the railway along the Devon coast will be better protected from rising sea levels, extreme weather, landslips and rockfalls for the next 100 years.”

Reacting to the government announcement of funding, Norman Baker, policy adviser at Campaign for Better Transport, said: “This is a vital route, so the investment is very welcome. Climate change means more extreme weather events, threatening infrastructure – all the more reason to prioritise low-carbon sustainable transport. We also urge the government to reopen the railway west of Okehampton to provide an alternative east-west route. The network into Cornwall is vulnerable if the only route in is through Dawlish.”

Progress to date in Dawlish

To date, the government has already invested more than £150m into delivering four phases of work, plus a further £21m in scheme development. Here is the work being done and in development:

- Phase one was successfully completed in 2020, a new sea wall along Marine Parade between Kennaway Tunnel and the Colonnades.
- Phase 2 is currently in delivery. Works will extend the wall from the Colonnades to the site of the old Coastguards house. Phases 1 and 2 represent over £80m. Network Rail is also investing a further £6m in improvements to Dawlish station a new accessible footbridge.
- Construction for Phase 3 is underway, a rockfall shelter and other interventions between the five tunnels immediately west of Dawlish, commenced in late 2021. This represents a further £38m.
- The fifth and final phase is still in development. These works will focus on a mile-long section of route sandwiched between steep high cliffs and the sea between Holcombe and Teignmouth (where the 2014 landslide occurred). Network Rail is continuing to develop options for this section of the route.