

Grade II listed railway repairs start in Whaley Bridge

January 18, 2023



Network Rail is investing £5.1 million to replace the Grade II listed Whaley Bridge which takes the railway over Buxton Road in Derbyshire's High Peak.

The heritage structure, which was built in 1863, needs to be replaced to keep rail passengers and the Whaley Bridge community safe for years to come.

Despite regular maintenance over the years, the railway crossing now needs to be significantly strengthened and undergo a major upgrade.

So engineers can replace the bridge safely, from Monday (16 January) the following traffic restrictions were put in place on Buxton Road:

- From 16 January – 31 March 2023, the road will be fully closed to traffic
- From 16 February – 5 March 2023, there will be no pedestrian access under the bridge
- Work is expected to be complete by April 2023

Without the work being carried out there's a real risk a bridge bash by a high vehicle could stop trains above for many months, completely cutting off Whaley Bridge, Chapel-en-le-Frith, Dove Holes and Buxton from the railway network.

Network Rail has tried to plan the work to cause the least disruption to road users, local people and businesses.

However, the geography of the bridge going over the main road in and out of the town and heritage status of the structure, means that the renewal will be complex and requires a full road closure over several weeks.

The project team met with local people earlier this month to hear their views and concerns on how the scale of the essential upgrade will impact on the town and its businesses.

Acting on suggestions from the public events, from January 23 a shuttle bus service will be provided to help people with additional mobility needs get from one side of Whaley Bridge to the other.

Network Rail is also working with the local bus company on ways its services can be strengthened during the road closure.

Details of the bus services and diversionary routes are expected to be finalised by the end of this week and will be publicised locally with posters and letters will be sent to residents and local businesses.

Rob Stephens, Network Rail principal route engineer, said: "It was positive to meet residents and business owners recently so we could have the chance to explain in detail why this vital bridge upgrade needs to be carried out, and also fully understand their concerns and what more we could do to reduce the impacts of our work on the town.

"Because of the bridge's special heritage status, we have to preserve as many of its original features as possible, which means the work will take much longer than a standard bridge replacement

"We're committed to keeping everyone up to date while our work to secure Whaley Bridge's railway link progresses and will be working as hard as we can to make sure the full road closure is as short as possible."

Rail passengers are also being given advanced notice of how this major bridge improvement will impact on trains.

From 17 February – 28 February 2023, there will be no railway services between Hazel Grove and Buxton. Passengers are advised to check www.nationalrail.co.uk before travelling.

Network Rail is working carefully with High Peak Borough Council and Historic England to make sure the work is carried out in consideration of the bridge's heritage status.

The team will preserve around one third of the original structure and replace the rest of the bridge in

keeping with its original design.

This important preservation lengthens the time the work will take compared to a more straightforward modern bridge replacement.

You can find out more some of the conservation work carried out across the network at: www.networkrail.co.uk/working-with-railway-heritage.

Photo credit: Network Rail