

Heart of Wales line to partially reopen in November as repairs following storm damage and freight derailment continue

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Passengers will again be able to travel on a section of the Heart of Wales line, which runs from Shrewsbury to Swansea, from November as Network Rail has set out the timescales for repairs to the line after two major incidents within a month.

In August extreme weather caused severe damage to the railway near Llandrindod Wells forcing the railway in mid-Wales to be closed before a freight train fire and derailment at Llangennech just weeks later.

Network Rail is already working around the clock to repair both sites with the storm damage expected to be finished in November, while the section of the Heart of Wales line near Llangennech will reopen in the New Year.

Heavy rainfall and stormy weather led to multiple landslips and washouts near Llandrindod Wells with an estimated 3,000 tonnes of cuttings, embankments and track being damaged while ballast – the stones that

support the track – was washed away by flooding.

Already Network Rail has made significant progress repairing the storm damage with hundreds of metres of debris cleared, while work is underway to re-instate the tracks and surrounding area. Engineers are working hard to stabilise the tracks and embankments while installing new culverts, which helps drain water and prevent flooding, and CCTV will enable improved monitoring of water levels in future storms. The section of the line will reopen in November.

Meanwhile, works at Llangennech are expected to continue throughout December ahead of a reopening in the new year.

Derailed wagons have already been removed and now Network Rail is working with Natural Resource Wales and DB Cargo as they repair track and deal with any contamination caused by the spilling of diesel from the freight train.

Bill Kelly, Network Rail's Wales route director, said: "A huge amount of progress has already been made as our engineers work tirelessly to repair the damage and open the Heart of Wales line as quickly as possible.

"They have had a mountain to climb in the last few weeks, but we now know the timescales for the reopening of the line, which we know is so vital to the local communities it serves.

"We thank those communities and passengers for their patience, and we will continue to keep them updated with our progress."

Alexia Course, rail operations director, Transport for Wales said: "It is great to see our colleagues in Network Rail progressing with work on the Heart of Wales line and we will reinstate rail services once the work is completed.

"We are still facing challenges as a result of COVID-19 and will be able to release further timetable information closer to the time of work completion.

"I'd like to thank customers for their patience and ask that they continue to check services online. We will continue to provide transport links using replacement buses."

David Edwards, chairman of the Heart of Wales Line Development Company, commented: "In recent months our line has been particularly badly affected by weather and other events, including COVID.

"We are glad to acknowledge the huge efforts being made by rail industry colleagues to reopen the route.

"When this has been achieved we intend to do all we can to ensure that the line plays its part in supporting local community activity and to the tourism sector, including our own award winning Walking Trail."

The level crossing at Llandrindod Wells will also be improved this autumn with the bulk of the work being delivered between 4 to 14 December. It will mean vehicles will not be able to use the level crossing and

the railway will be closed for this period. More details will be provided nearer the time.

Photo credit: Network Rail

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