

# Iconic Ribblehead viaduct repaired for 'Staycation Summer'

April 9, 2021



Work to restore the world-renowned Ribblehead viaduct for rail passengers and tourists in North Yorkshire is now complete.

From today (Friday April 9) visitors to the Ribble Valley can see the iconic piece of Victorian railway architecture in all its glory after months of specialist repairs by Network Rail.

Since November 2020, 100ft high scaffolding towers have moved across seven of the viaduct's 24 arches to carry out masonry, drainage and repainting work.

The £2.1m investment as part of the Great North Rail Project will secure the Grade II\* listed structure's future as both an historic landmark and vital railway link on the Settle-Carlisle railway line.

The improvements have been completed in time for easing of coronavirus lockdown restrictions this spring ready for an expected 'Staycation Summer'.

Bumper visitor numbers are expected for the Yorkshire Dales National Park, with the Ribblehead viaduct

being one of its star attractions.

Philippa Britton, principal programme sponsor for Network Rail, said: “The teams have worked throughout a harsh winter to restore this hugely important and impressive piece of Victorian engineering for the future and I’m hugely proud of the work we’ve carried out as part of the Great North Rail Project.

“We’ve worked incredibly closely with heritage experts and conservationists to make sure the repairs were sympathetic to the historic structure but would also last the test of time. Now these once in a generation repairs are complete we hope you won’t see scaffolding on this scale at Ribbleshead again for many years to come.”

The much-loved Ribbleshead viaduct is not only one of the country’s most recognisable railway structures, it’s also an important transport corridor for local people, tourists and freight.

It carries the Settle to Carlisle railway 400 metres across the Ribbles valley.

The work will make journeys more reliable for Northern passengers and tourism charter services like the ‘Staycation Express’ which launched in Summer 2020.

Mark Rand, vice-president of the Friends of the Settle to Carlisle line, said: “This has been another chapter in the history of the amazing Ribbleshead viaduct. Thirty years ago it was declared to be ‘life-expired’ and in need of replacement or the entire line would have to close. Happily, neither of those things happened. All credit to Network Rail and their contractors who have done this work through a bitter Ribbleshead winter. The viaduct stands proud and strong, a monumental tribute to those who lived, and died, to build it.”

Adrian Quine, director of Rail Charter Services which runs the ‘Staycation Express’, said: “We are expecting unprecedented demand for our trains this summer. The restoration of daily dining car trains along the line – the first since 1975 – is already causing a lot of excitement. What better way to experience it than enjoying three course silver service with drink in hand as the Staycation Express crosses this iconic structure.”

During this project, the latest laser and drone survey technology mapped every inch of the Grade II\* listed viaduct for the first time, giving a detailed record of its condition so it can be closely monitored in future.

In February [plans were submitted to the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority](#) to fix further minor faults found during the course of the planned work.

This unexpected planning application was granted so the repairs could be completed as part of the same project.

With experts already in place this has saved a huge amount of taxpayers’ money – preventing Network Rail from having to come back and erect scaffolding all over again in the near future.

### **Ribbleshead viaduct key statistics**

- 104 ft. high
- 402 metres long
- 24 arches
- Built between 1870 – 1875
- Opened on 1st May 1876

### **Looking after Ribbleshead viaduct**

At 400m long, Ribbleshead viaduct's 24 arches sweep through the Three Peaks region of Yorkshire Dales National Park.

Network Rail is proud to look after such a historic piece of Britain's railway. Ensuring that Victorian structures remain in safe working order and last for generations to come is a great responsibility.

To do this, Network Rail does visual exams of the viaduct annually and detailed inspections every six years. It also typically carries out a major renewal every 10 years and any minor works as and when necessary.

Severe weather is one of the challenges Network Rail faces as custodian of Ribbleshead viaduct, which crosses open land in an exposed position.

For more information on the [history of the Settle to Carlisle line click here](#).

*Photo credit: Network Rail*