

Longest railway bridge in Midlands to be installed this weekend

May 4, 2022



Engineers are preparing to install a new railway bridge – which will be the longest single-span rail structure in the West Midlands.

Network Rail is building the bridge, destined for Stechford in Birmingham, in a partnership with HS2 so new tracks for the major project can pass beneath.

This weekend, it will replace an old railway viaduct on the Stechford to Aston freight line, which was demolished over the Early May Bank Holiday.

The new 2,600-tonne structure is known as the SAS 13 bridge. It has been pre-assembled by contractor Skanska over 22 months, built in a large compound beside the existing railway lines.

The advantage of this construction method is it cuts carbon emissions and the number of lorry movements on local roads, minimising the project's impact on the local community.

In numbers, the SAS 13 bridge:

- Weighs a total of 2,600 tonnes (equivalent to 940 Mini Cooper cars)
- Spans a distance of 92 metres
- Is held together by 26,715 bolts weighing a total of 25 tonnes
- Is made from 3,601 cubic metres of concrete
- And 1,118 tonnes of steel
- Is an investment of £85m to ready the existing railway for HS2

The new metal and concrete bridge is 92 metres long, making it only four metres shorter than London's Elizabeth Tower, the home of Big Ben.

During the installation, 18 huge Self Propelled Modular Transporters (SPMT) will drive the bridge into place before tracks are re-laid so trains can run again on Monday 9 May.

Each SPMT has 24 wheels, meaning 432 wheels will carry the load when the bridge is manoeuvred into position.

Patrick Cawley, director for 'On Network Works' for HS2 and Network Rail, said: "Moving this 2,600 tonne bridge into place is no mean feat and the new structure will ensure Britain's new zero-carbon, high-speed railway HS2 works in harmony with the existing rail routes into the second city.

"As you'd expect from such a complex engineering project, CrossCountry passengers will see changes to their weekend journeys in May. I'd urge people to please check before they travel using the National Rail Enquiries website or app, and I thank everyone in advance for their patience while we help build this railway for the future."

Rosario Barcena, Skanska Rail programme director, said: "We're extremely excited to be working with Network Rail and HS2 to deliver the SAS 13 bridge replacement project. This project will deliver the largest single span railway bridge in the West Midlands, improving connectivity and paving the way for the HS2 route into Birmingham City Centre.

"We have designed and constructed the bridge to deliver value for money, reduce impact to the environment and disruption to the local community. The bridge has been fabricated on-site, cutting carbon emissions and reducing vehicle movements to and from site. We're looking forward to seeing it in operation."

To carry out the work safely, CrossCountry services between Birmingham New Street and Coleshill Parkway are being replaced with rail replacement buses each weekend in May.

Passengers are being urged to plan their journeys in advance at www.nationalrail.co.uk or visit CrossCountry's dedicated webpage here.