

# Major investment complete for historic viaduct on Cumbrian Coast line

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Multi-million-pound work to improve an historic viaduct is now complete making journeys faster and more reliable for passengers and freight on the Cumbrian Coast line.

Trains can once again travel the length of the Cumbrian coast line after an eight-day closure of the railway between Millom and Sellafield.

Wooden timbers and 600 metres of rail were renewed on the 18-span Eskmeals viaduct in a £2m investment as part of the Great North Rail Project.

The work will improve journeys for both passenger and freight services between Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness.

New track installed on the viaduct, which carries the railway over the River Esk estuary, means that precautionary speed restrictions for trains can now be lifted.

The iconic 18-span viaduct was built in 1868 and still has its original wrought iron girders, which were

strengthened in the 1920s, and its red sandstone piers which support the structure in the estuary itself.

Peter Luby, programme director at Network Rail, said: “Our teams have worked hard to ensure that this planned upgrade scheme could be completed as scheduled, providing passengers in Cumbria with faster and more reliable journeys.

“It’s not easy working day and night in the middle of a Cumbrian estuary, and staff have had to contend with more challenges from the weather and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

“I’m really proud of the team for completing the work successfully, and look forward to welcoming back passengers in Cumbria to a more reliable railway.”

Chris Jackson, regional director at Northern, said: “We would like to thank Network Rail for completing this upgrade to the track along the historic Eskmeals viaduct as part of the Great North Rail Project.

“This vital work will improve the reliability and speed of our services along the Cumbrian coastline between Carlisle and Barrow-in-Furness.

“Our rail replacement buses have kept people on the move since the line was closed between Millom and Sellafield to carry out this work, but we’re looking forward to, once again, operating trains between these stations.”

While improvements were made to the viaduct structure, engineers also upgraded walkways and handrails, making future maintenance work easier and safer for railway staff.

Meanwhile, passengers should continue following Government guidelines around the use of public transport. Those who must travel should wear face coverings on their journey.

People who need to make journeys are advised to check [www.nationalrail.co.uk](https://www.nationalrail.co.uk) for the latest information.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*