

Major investment to improve journeys over world-renowned Ribblehead viaduct

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North Yorkshire's iconic Ribblehead viaduct will undergo important maintenance this summer to secure its future for decades to come.

The 144-year-old viaduct will have its drainage improved and brickwork restored making journeys for passenger and freight trains more reliable on the stunning Settle to Carlisle railway line.

The Great North Rail Project work will start in July and will see an investment of £2.1m in the Grade II listed feat of Victorian engineering.

Ribblehead Viaduct opened in 1876 bridging the gap between Ribblehead and Dent on the exposed and windy Batty Moor.

Work will take place on the viaduct between July and October 2020, when there will be:

- Brickwork repairs along the structure
- Removal of vegetation and repairing the damage caused by plants and weeds
- Upgrades to drainage systems across the viaduct's 24 arches
- Repainting of metal and pipework in one universal colour

Marc Vipham, route asset manager for structures at Network Rail, said: "It's a privilege to look after so many significant buildings and structures across the rail network, but Ribblehead viaduct has got to be one of the crown jewels of Victorian civil engineering.

"We know that the structure is incredibly important both locally and internationally, and we want to give it the care and attention that it deserves so that it can be enjoyed by future generations of both passengers and sightseers."

Scaffolding will be installed on sections of the 400m viaduct so engineers can safely carry out the vital upgrades.

Network Rail is working closely with Historic England and the Yorkshire Dales National Park to ensure the work is sympathetically carried out in line with guidance for historically significant structures.

Steve Hopkinson, regional director at Northern, said: "The viaduct is iconic and we're really proud to have such a magnificent piece of engineering on our network.

"It is also a vital – and much loved – part of the hugely popular Settle – Carlisle Line and the work being carried out will ensure future generations are able to enjoy one of the most beautiful rail journeys in the UK."

Paul Brown, chairman of the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line group, said: "This work has come about as a result of regular inspections of the Ribblehead viaduct. We work closely with Network Rail and welcome this investment in the line's future.

"The Ribblehead viaduct was once seen as the route's major weakness. It is now probably stronger than it was when the Victorians built it. This work is needed to keep it that way."

No major disruption is expected for passengers using the Settle to Carlisle line during the viaduct's 2020 maintenance.

Passengers are reminded to continue following Government advice regarding public transport during the coronavirus pandemic.

Those who do need to travel are being advised to check www.nationalrail.co.uk or with their train operator ahead of the Ribblehead viaduct work.

Ribblehead viaduct key statistics

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