

Network Rail completes £9.8 million major upgrade to North Yorkshire rail route

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Network Rail has completed a major £9.8million upgrade to the rail route between Knaresborough and Poppleton which will improve services for passengers for years to come.

The project has been carried out by Network Rail and funded by North Yorkshire County Council and the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership supported by Government funding from the Local Growth Fund.

The upgrade has seen the signalling system modernised and the process of token signalling removed, as well as changes to the track layout at Cattal railway station, which will allow two trains to enter the station at the same time. Work has also taken place to install new safety measures at some level crossings on the route and this work is vital to maintain safety once more trains begin running.

The completion of the project will not only create a more modern, reliable and resilient railway for passengers, but will also enable more services to run in the future, better connecting Harrogate and York, as well as stations along the route.

Luke Espin, Sponsor for Network Rail, said: "This project will enable more services to run in the future and is key to improving transport links for passengers, and we're really happy that this work is now complete.

"To allow this work to take place safely, there were some changes to train services, as well as short term road closures, and we'd like to thank all those who were impacted for their patience.

"It's been great to work with both North Yorkshire County Council and the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership on this project and we look forward to passengers reaping the benefits."

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "The completion of these vital upgrades at Cattal and along the Harrogate-York line is fantastic news for passengers across North Yorkshire, creating a more modern, reliable and resilient railway for years to come.

"By enabling improved connections between Harrogate and York, as well as stations along the route, it will help this region build back better, boosting the local economy and supporting tourism."

Andrew Jones MP for Harrogate and Knaresborough, said: "In recent years we've seen more services and faster services on the York-Harrogate-Leeds line. We have seen signalling upgrades and the new Azuma services to and from London coming to Harrogate. We have also seen the back of the old, leaky pacer trains.

"Now we have seen the completion of the works enabling two trains at once to enter Cattal station. The importance of this is that it removes a bottleneck to future increases in capacity on the line. This means that the ability to increase services to and from York now exists whereas previously the infrastructure constrained that. It is another huge step forward for our local rail line."

Rachael Maskell, MP for York Central, said: "It is a day to be celebrated as the upgrade to the York-Harrogate line reaches completion. Greater connectivity will benefit the economies of York and Harrogate and all stops in between as well as provide vital infrastructure. Good public transport improves our environment, prevents congestion on our roads and supports our communities. I trust that there will be more collaborations in the years to come to secure modal shift."

North Yorkshire County Councillor Don Mackenzie, Executive Member for Access, said: "We are pleased to be part of the delivery of this improvement to the Harrogate line which will enable an increased, quicker and more reliable service in the future.

"The line now benefits from more modern technology and Network Rail have increased safety at a number of level crossings and reduced congestion at Harrogate railway station.

"We have enjoyed working with Network Rail and the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership to deliver this project which significantly enhances rail infrastructure in the North."

A total of £9.6m was secured by York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership from the Government's Local Growth Fund to help fund the rail improvements.

Cllr Keith Aspden, leader of City of York Council, said: “It is excellent news that the Harrogate to York railway line has been modernised. As many people will know, York is a crucial rail hub for the region and therefore, improving the connections to our city is not only important for our local economy, but also for the economic success of the region. In addition to supporting our economic recovery from the pandemic and improving the journey’s for York residents who already use this line, this scheme also supports our ambition to provide local residents with better options to use sustainable transport across the region.”

David Dickson, Chair of the York & North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership Infrastructure and Joint Assets Board, said: “We strongly believe in a greener, fairer, stronger vision for our region and the outcomes from this vital project certainly demonstrate those values. Better connectivity between Harrogate and York will provide a huge economic boost for our region and we’re grateful to all organisations involved who have worked so hard to get the project to this landmark stage.”

Councillor Phil Ireland, Harrogate Borough Council’s cabinet member for carbon reduction and sustainability, said: “I’m delighted to see that the work to improve the rail line between Knaresborough and Poppleton has been completed.

“Not only will it encourage residents, commuters and visitors to travel more sustainably in the future, it will also strengthen the connection between the two locations and maximise the economic benefits that two trains per hour between would bring.”

Photo credit: Network Rail

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