

Network Rail completes major bridge improvements so freight can keep Drax Power Station running

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- Network Rail successfully completes work to repair and strengthen Aire Bridge, North Yorkshire – a key route for freight services to Drax Power Station
- During the 10-day blockade, work took place to install a new waterproofing system, strengthen the steelwork and renew over 100m of track
- Network Rail is thanking local residents and industry partners for their patience while this essential work was carried out

Network Rail has successfully completed work on a £2.1million project to repair and strengthen Aire Bridge in North Yorkshire to improve reliability for the 100 freight services transporting materials to/from Drax Power Station on average each week.

Over the 10-day blockade (Friday 27 August – Monday 6 September), Network Rail staff removed more than 100m of track so that a new waterproofing and drainage system with a reinforced concrete slab could be installed. New rail, sleepers and ballast – beams and stones which support the track – were then re-laid.

Work was also carried out to strengthen the steel structure, which should reduce the amount of maintenance work needed in the future.

These repairs mean that rainwater can now drain more effectively, reducing the likelihood of future structural damage and allowing freight trains to transport biomass to and from Drax Power Station more reliably.

Matt Rice, Route Director for Network Rail's North & East Route, said: "I'd like to say a huge thank you to local residents and our colleagues at Drax Power Station for their patience and collaboration while we completed these essential repairs.

"By strengthening the bridge, we're able to reduce the number of delays caused by future maintenance work and therefore deliver an improved service for our freight customers and the communities they serve."

Aire Bridge is a 65m long three-span underbridge carrying the twin-ballasted, non-electrified tracks over the River Aire to the power station, which supplies around 12 percent of the UK's renewable electricity.

Mark Gibbens, Drax Group's Head of Logistics, said: "Drax Power Station is the UK's biggest renewable power generator, providing enough green energy for 4 million homes in the first half of this year.

"Network Rail's work to strengthen the bridge makes our global sustainable biomass supply chain more resilient, ensuring millions of homes and businesses can rely on the renewable power Drax generates."

Photo credit: Network Rail