

Network Rail in exclusive discussions with consortium on deal to upgrade telecoms infrastructure

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Network Rail says it is in exclusive discussions with a private sector consortium to enter a long-term partnership to upgrade its ageing telecoms infrastructure and improve connectivity across the UK in a deal that will result in significant savings for the taxpayer.

The project will accelerate the necessary trackside fibre and mast upgrades to future-proof the telecoms network and:

- enhance wireless connectivity on trains and in stations for passengers
- improve data-driven train performance and safety systems
- align with the Government's levelling up agenda and support current objectives to improve connectivity across Britain

In a project launched two years ago, Network Rail has now entered exclusive discussions with a private sector consortium to upgrade the railway's ageing telecoms infrastructure. The parties expect to reach an

agreement by mid-2023.

The consortium is a partnership between two private sector businesses – both market leaders in the development of mobile tower and fibre assets. In return for granting rights to commercialise the network, the third-party funding will help accelerate the necessary upgrades to Network Rail's ageing telecoms infrastructure. The proposed transaction will help future-proof Network Rail's telecoms infrastructure by providing new fibre optic cable and mobile towers across Network Rail's estate.

This connectivity will enable the shift towards an efficient, data-driven railway, providing all-important improvements to train performance and safety. It will bring other benefits for passengers, such as better wireless connectivity on trains and in stations. It also aligns with the government's plans to accelerate the provision of high-quality broadband to harder-to-reach rural communities and supports levelling up initiatives.

Harriet Hepburn, Network Rail's Corporate Finance Director, said: "This is an exciting opportunity for Network Rail, and we are excited at the prospect of entering this long-term partnership. The proposal provides a comprehensive package that will deliver real benefits for passengers and the railway, and also significant savings for the UK tax-payer."

Photo credit: Network Rail