

Network Rail outlines imminent final phase of Dawlish sea wall construction

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The Town Gateway/Colonnade underpass in Dawlish is due to temporarily close next month as Network Rail begins a key stage of its construction on the second section of the new, bigger sea wall that is being built to protect the coastal railway and town from storms and rising sea levels.

From Monday 13 June for up to 12 weeks, the Town Gateway/Colonnade underpass is proposed to be closed for safety reasons while engineers install the foundations for a new bridge that will connect the two sections of new accessible public promenade and for the box culvert through which Dawlish Water will flow into the sea.

Engineers will be operating large and heavy machinery to install 20-metre-long foundations, required due to the poor ground conditions in this area. Safety is Network Rail's number one priority, and the size and location of this machinery means the underpass therefore needs to be closed during construction.

During this time, the beach and Kings Walk promenade (opposite Marine Parade) will remain open and access will be via the stepped footbridge at Kennaway Tunnel. Upon crossing the footbridge, the beach can be accessed from Boat Cove slipway and Coryton Cove via its usual ramped or stepped access.

Every effort will be made to complete this work sooner where it is safe and possible to do so. If there are times during the construction when the underpass can be safely reopened, it will be, and this will be publicised on a weekly basis using local signage and via the South West Rail Resilience Programme (SWRRP) [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) pages.

This is the final critical aspect of this work to protect the railway and historic station. Delaying it until after the summer months is not possible due to the extreme weather that the Dawlish coastline can experience. Postponing this work would also prevent the second section of sea wall reopening to the public in September as planned.

Once complete it will link up with the first section of sea wall and mean residents and visitors alike will be able to walk along a wider and safer promenade from Boat Cove, south of Dawlish station, nearly a kilometre to Coastguard breakwater to the north before continuing uninterrupted to Dawlish Warren along the original sea wall. They will also enjoy step free access to the beaches and station.

Accessibility remains a core focus of this project and a number of improvements have already been made at Dawlish station for passengers with reduced mobility. The platforms have been refurbished making it safer and easier for passengers to step onto and off trains, and the installation of tactile paving on the edge of the platforms will improve accessibility for people with a visual impairment.

The design for the new fully accessible station footbridge with lifts has also now received prior approval from Teignbridge District Council with work to start later this year and the footbridge expected to open in 2023.

Julie Gregory, Network Rail senior sponsor, said: "I would like to apologise for any disruption the closure of the Town Gateway/Colonnade underpass may cause and sincerely thank residents, businesses and visitors for their patience and understanding while we complete this critical, final stage of construction.

"I appreciate this closure will be disappointing for the community, especially for people with accessibility needs or those with pushchairs and particularly during the busier summer months.

"However, we will never compromise on the safety of the public or our colleagues, and to ensure we remain on course to complete the second section of sea wall and open the entire promenade and both beaches in September, it is imperative this work is completed now."

Work on the second stage of this £80m Department for Transport-funded project began in [November 2020](#) and once complete this project will protect the town and railway from extreme weather and rising sea levels for generations to come.

For more information about this project, please visit the [Dawlish sea wall – section two webpages](#); or find us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

For any additional questions or concerns about the work taking place, please call Network Rail's dedicated 24-hour National Helpline on **03457 11 41**

41, visit <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/communities/contact-us/> or e-mail crwest@networkrail.co.uk.