

Network Rail's erosion defences hope to "turn back Tyne"

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A major investment to protect the railway from erosion by the River Tyne and allow a popular footpath to reopen will get underway this month.

River erosion has caused a section of Keelman's Way Footpath in Wylam, which runs next to the railway, to collapse meaning it's had to close for safety reasons.

To prevent further deterioration which could impact on the rail route between Wylam and Clara Vale, **Network Rail** is carrying out work to install a defence against erosion.

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The £3.1 million project will see rock armour installed, as well as reinstating a slope on the embankment. This will protect the railway from erosion and make sure that services can run reliably and safely for years to come. The scheme will also mean that this section of the popular walking route can reopen once more.

Teams from Network Rail will begin work to install a compound on site this week, with the bulk of the work set to begin later this month. The work will not cause any disruption to train services, and the project is expected to complete in February 2023.

Jonny Ham, Lead Portfolio Manager for Network Rail, said: “This important investment will protect the railway between Wylam and Clara Vale, making sure it can keep trains running safely and reliably for future years.

“We’re pleased to be working with local stakeholders and environmental experts to deliver this intricate project. The work will also mean this section of Keelman’s Way Footpath can reopen, which we know will be well used by the community.”

Liz Twist, MP for Blaydon, said: “The Keelman’s Way footpath and the railway line are really important links for my constituents in Clara Vale, Crawcrook and beyond. Getting the project to this stage has been a great example of collaborative working between local ward Councillors, Network Rail, Gateshead Council, the Environment Agency and many other people and organisations. I would like to thank the Network Rail team for their work on resolving this issue.”