

Plan confirmed for final phase of Barmouth Viaduct works

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The final phase restoration of Barmouth Viaduct is to be split, with the aim of reducing passenger disruption as it benefits from additional repairs.

Network Rail has confirmed the Grade II listed viaduct will be open for busy October half term and Christmas period – with extra work planned to secure the vital rail link’s future for generations to come.

The final stage of refurbishment – originally planned to take place in one go this autumn – will be split across the next two years, to reduce the impact on rail services, the community and local economy.

As well as upgrading the metallic elements of the Grade II* listed bridge and laying new track, the additional repairs will include strengthening work to the north abutments and further upgrades of some of the timber elements.

These repairs weren’t part of the original restoration plan but engineers working on the 154-year-old bridge during **phases one and two** found it to be in a much worse condition than originally anticipated.

The work to refurbish the iconic railway structure is the biggest and most ambitious in its history.

Nick Millington, interim route director for Network Rail Wales and the Borders said: “We know how important Barmouth Viaduct is for passengers and communities along the Cambrian Coast and this once-in-a-lifetime restoration will protect it for future generations.

“Undertaking additional repairs on top of upgrading the metallic elements will ensure this vital rail link will remain safe for passengers, the local community and tourists for many years to come.

“We’ve carefully planned our work to avoid the busy summer season when tourism in Barmouth and the local area is at its height. We’ve also decided to take two shorter closures of the line this autumn, which means we can reopen the railway for the school half term and the Christmas period.”

This autumn, the railway will be closed between Machynlleth and Pwllheli for five weeks from 8pm on Sunday 11 September to Saturday 15 October. It will then reopen for four weeks, including half term, and then close from 8pm on Sunday 13 November and reopen in time for the Christmas period on Saturday 10 December. Dates for working on the viaduct during 2023 are still being finalised.

Network Rail will be taking advantage of the autumn closure to deliver further major upgrades elsewhere along the Cambrian Line including laying new track at Felga Fach and Pwllheli Station.

As well as the works at Barmouth, repairs will also be undertaken to seven other viaducts on the line; Dovey, Artro, Traeth Mawr, Leri and Cottage viaducts.

Colin Lea, Transport for Wales’ Planning and Performance Director, said: “We’re pleased to see Network Rail are safeguarding the future of the iconic viaduct at Barmouth and the wider Cambrian Coast route through substantial track and bridge works all along the line this Autumn. This investment sits alongside our own in transforming services throughout Wales and Borders, including brand new trains for the Cambrian Coast in the years to come.

“Services will be disrupted while the work takes place but, working closely with Network Rail, we have been able to agree to reopen the line for four weeks from mid-November – which was not possible during last Autumn’s works. High quality replacement bus services will operate in place of trains and it’s important to check before you travel. You can do this on the TfW website www.tfw.wales, our social media channels or on the TfW app.”

Network Rail and contractors, Alun Griffiths, are working hard to maintain the viaduct’s magnificent appearance by replacing the timber and metallic elements on a like-for-like basis.

Network Rail has been working closely with Cadw, Gwynedd County Council, Transport for Wales and others over several years to develop plans to upgrade the bridge.

Photo credit: Dominic Vacher