

# Rail Minister visits Brunel Plaza regeneration

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The Rail Minister has visited Plymouth to meet those responsible for the regeneration of Brunel Plaza.

The Brunel Plaza scheme involves an upgrade for Plymouth Railway Station, along with a major revamp of the surrounding area, including the redevelopment of Intercity House by the University of Plymouth to train the city's future health professionals; a new hotel and multi-storey car park; and improvements to public areas and links to the city centre.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: "Our stations serve as gateways to our towns and cities, ensuring communities are connected, enabling access to education and employment and facilitating tourism.

"The Brunel Plaza Scheme will mark an exciting new chapter for Plymouth and I was delighted to visit the station to see first-hand how it will help transform the area into a vibrant catalyst for regeneration.

"This government will continue to invest in vital projects such as this to ensure we boost regional economies and build back better from Covid-19."

Improvements for the station concourse include doubling the capacity of the existing gate-line with better shops and facilities for passengers.

The project involves:

- refurbishment of Plymouth Station concourse
- refurbishment and change of use of Intercity Place for use by the University of Plymouth
- re-location of facilities within the RISC building to a new building to the west of the station
- demolition of the RISC building
- construction of a new multi-storey car park on the site of the former RISC building
- new-build accommodation for the University of Plymouth
- demolition of the existing multi-storey car park
- construction of a new hotel on the site of the demolished multi-storey car park
- improved and re-configured pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to the station and city centre

Permission was granted in September for the Intercity Place project, which will involve the complete regeneration of an 11-storey building overlooking Plymouth Railway Station.

It will be reconfigured and refurbished throughout – with the exterior also being rejuvenated – so that the finished development creates a striking and welcoming entrance to Britain’s Ocean City.

The University has now signed a long-term lease on the building from Network Rail, and work will begin imminently to give it a new lease of life.

Once completed, it will house inter-professional clinical skills facilities for the University’s Faculty of Health and be used to train future nurses, midwives, paramedics, physiotherapists, and other allied health professionals.

There will also be additional educational services, enabling staff to work together in one location to support the future health workforce.

Council Leader Tudor Evans OBE said: “This is huge and this is happening – you can already see change on the ground. The corner car park at Station Approach has been turned into a compound for contractors, diggers have been on site – and we’ve had a mural painted at North Cross, to give a nicer welcome for visitors.

“We need to give people a much better impression when they arrive in Plymouth. We need them to feel this is a city going places, a city that is on the up. It’s an ambitious project that is coming together like a giant jigsaw, with key organisations each playing their part. It couldn’t come at a better time.”

The existing car park opposite the entrance is also earmarked for demolition and a new hotel and second university building created in its place. The masterplan proposes a new car park, almost doubling the capacity to 469 spaces, for the site of the RISC building. Station staff accommodation will be modernised and significant new public space created including a direct pedestrian link to North Cross and the city centre.

GWR Deputy Managing Director Richard Rowland said: “It is easy to see why the station is regarded as the gateway to the South West.

“Over the last two years we at GWR we have delivered new Intercity Express Trains, and more frequent and faster journeys to and from the city, and I am delighted that this major upgrade work can begin creating the entrance the city deserves.”

Network Rail Route Director, Western Route, Mike Gallop said: “Training future NHS staff is essential, and we are excited to offer Intercity Place back to the city in order to support the future of the NHS. We believe that Plymouth provides opportunity for young academics across the country and the world.

“This is why we are upgrading Plymouth railway station to meet the city’s growing need of a transport hub that evokes an arrival that lets you know you have reached Britain’s ocean city.”

Tim Brooksbank, Interim Director of Estates and Facilities at the University of Plymouth, said: “The Intercity Place project will be a landmark development in every sense and demonstrates our commitment to, and confidence in, the city of Plymouth.

“It will transform an iconic building on Plymouth’s skyline to create a modern and attractive welcome to the city for residents, workers, tourists and students alike. But its role in training future generations of health professionals means it can be an inspiring place for all those who work and learn there, and enhance our place as the largest provider of healthcare training in the South West.”

The entire scheme is expected to cost in the region of £80m and has the backing of Plymouth City Council; the University of Plymouth; Cornwall and Heart of South West LEPS; the DfT; GWR and Network Rail.

*Photo credit: Great Western Railway*

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