

Railway line between Oxford and Worcester reopens after wall landslip

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Services between Oxford and Worcester have resumed following the reopening of the line between Oxford and Kingham, after Network Rail successfully repaired a wall collapse and landslip at Yarnton.

On the evening of Friday 10 February, a side wing wall of the road over rail bridge at Yarnton, Oxfordshire, collapsed onto the rail line serving Oxford to Worcester. Network Rail was on site immediately to repair the damage and put in place protective barriers to protect the rail line, however further landslips continued to occur in the embankment adjacent to the bridge, and as a result the railway between Oxford and Kingham was closed.

The ground was extremely unstable and posed a significant risk to the stability of the road and utilities in the road. The landslide had also exposed a gas main which presented an added complexity to overcome during the repairs.

At the start of last week, Network Rail's engineers were on site conducting detailed investigations to identify the most suitable options to stabilise the embankment so that the road bridge and railway underneath it could be safely reopened to traffic. Network Rail worked with specialist civil engineering

contractors Balfour Beatty to design metal sheet piling to act as a retaining wall to support the embankment and road.

The team of engineers began installing the metal sheet piles, as well as 22 soil nails, on Friday evening and worked tirelessly over the weekend and into this start of this week to complete the work.

A 20mph temporary speed restriction will remain in place and a watchman will be positioned on site until Network Rail has completed the second phase of longer-term repairs to reinforce the structure and ground. Construction for this phase of work is due to begin at the end of next week and is expected to take a couple of weeks to complete which will be carried out overnight when no services are running to avoid disrupting passengers.

The highway of the road over rail bridge at Yarnton will remain closed until at least the middle of next week with plans to reopen to a single lane controlled by traffic lights.

Nicky Hughes from Network Rail, said: “We would like to thank passengers for their patience and understanding while we have made these vital repairs at Yarnton.

“Our team of engineers has worked tirelessly alongside our specialist civil engineering contractors Balfour Beatty, to design and install a solution that has enabled us to quickly and safely reopen the line to passenger services tomorrow morning as planned.

“The road over rail bridge at Yarnton is 170 years old – from the Victorian era – and one of over 2,000 similar aged bridges we have across our Western route. We take the structural integrity of these bridges very seriously and regularly monitor their condition and conduct detailed examinations every six years. Over the coming weeks our team of engineers will return to this site to begin the second phase of longer-term repairs which will further reinforce the structure and ground around the railway.”

Photo credit: Network Rail