

Railway line set to reopen after Carlisle freight train derailment

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Direct trains between Carlisle and Newcastle and Carlisle and Skipton are set to return this week after the routes were closed by a major freight train derailment.

Railway engineers are putting the finishing touches to complex repairs at Petheril Bridge junction after several wagons of a train carrying powdered cement came off the track seven weeks ago.

Network Rail has released latest footage from the site where a new reinforced-concrete bridge deck was poured ready for tracks to be reinstated last weekend so trains can run again from Wednesday (7 December).

Huge damage was caused to a Victorian-built railway bridge, railway lines and signalling equipment during the incident on Wednesday 19 October.

Since then the railway has been closed in both directions – impacting all services on the Tyne Valley line between Carlisle and Newcastle and the Settle to Carlisle line between Carlisle, Appleby and Skipton.

More than 25,000 hours of work has taken place to get the railway restored so trains can run again.

Phil James, Network Rail's North West route director, said: "I'm sorry to passengers who've faced much longer journeys over the last seven weeks while we carried out our emergency railway repairs. I know how frustrating rail delays can be on people's lives and we've worked tirelessly to get the routes restored as quickly as possible.

"This has been a very complex recovery and repair job. When it's complete this major railway junction will be better than new and will provide more reliable journeys for passengers and freight for years to come."

Over the last seven weeks:

- Forensic rail accident investigators assessed the cause of the derailment
- The locomotive and 11 of 14 wagons carrying powdered cement were recovered soon after the incident
- Giant vacuums removed 80 tonnes of powdered cement from 3 wagons which needed lifting by a huge crane
- An 800-tonne crane recovered those wagons which ended up in the water and on the embankment
- Environment Agency experts made sure no contamination entered the river Petteril
- Eighty metres of damage track was replaced
- 400 metres of cabling was installed for signals and points
- Two switches – moving sections of track which enables trains to switch lines – were replaced
- 125 tonnes of structural concrete was poured into 16 tonnes of metal reinforcement cages to repair the damaged railway bridge over the river
- The work took 25,000 hours, over 40 people working 12-hour days, 7 days-week, for 7 weeks.

Train services are due to resume from start of service on Wednesday 7 December.

In the meantime, rail replacement buses will continue to be in operation to keep passengers on the move, with people being urged to plan their journeys at www.nationalrail.co.uk.

Kerry Peters, regional director at Northern, said: "We have been working very hard with Network Rail to reopen the railway at Petteril bridge following the freight train derailment in October.

"Work will be completed next week and Northern train services will be able to resume on both the Tyne Valley and Settle to Carlisle lines. We'd like to thank our customers for being patient during this disruption and everyone involved in getting our passengers moving again."

Sharon Kennedy, Environment Agency environment manager, said: "The Environment Agency incident response teams provided support to the initial rail incident and the ongoing recovery work to ensure minimum impact to the environment. This example shows how we can work together at pace to respond to a critical incident to support safe rail infrastructure, protect the environment and manage flood risk to the public."

Anne Ridley, from the Tyne Valley Community Rail Partnership, said: "This incident has highlighted the

importance of the railway to our communities and local residents. We welcome the news that the complex recovery and reinstatement operation is on target for re-opening of services to and from Carlisle for passengers on the Tyne Valley and Settle-Carlisle routes. Thank you for everyone involved in the operation and to the rail replacement bus companies and their drivers for helping passengers to get to their destinations.”

*The derailment involved one locomotive hauling 14 wagons, each filled with 80 tonnes of powdered cement, as it travelled between Clitheroe and Carlisle on Wednesday 19 October.

Five of the wagons derailed shortly after 8pm at Petteril Bridge Junction.

An initial report published by the Rail Accident Investigation Branch found that a fault with a train wheel was the most likely cause of the derailment.

Photo and video credit: Network Rail