

Significant step towards more resilient railway as new Dawlish sea wall takes shape despite challenging conditions caused by Storm Ciara

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Plans to protect the vital rail artery to the south west from rising sea levels and extreme weather have taken a significant step forward despite challenging storm conditions.

Network Rail are installing a bigger sea wall in Dawlish, Devon, to protect the coastal railway line, as well as the iconic footpath that runs beside it, from the sea and the resilience work reached a significant milestone as the first new panels, which form the main structure of the wall, were erected despite Storm Ciara.

The new sea wall is part of a series of measures along the coast to protect the only railway line that connects 50 towns and cities in Devon and Cornwall with the rest of the country.

In total, over 100 panels will be installed at Dawlish over the coming weeks and residents, visitors and rail passengers can now start to see how the structure will look.

Once this phase of construction has been completed, Network Rail's focus will turn to creating the wider, safer promenade which retains the views of the coast – a feature that the area is famous for.

David Lovell, senior programme manager for the South West Rail Resilience Programme said: “Despite challenging conditions, our team managed to get the first pre-cast wall panels in place last weekend.

“This is an important landmark in the Dawlish sea wall project, taking us one step further to protecting this iconic section of railway and the coastal footpath for generations to come.”

Once the work to install and back-fill the panels is complete, track drainage will be put in, before construction staff then turn their focus to the promenade, where lighting, seating and surfacing work will be carried out.

Work is scheduled to be completed before the peak summer season.

Photo credit: Network Rail