

Time-lapse shows Bicester railway underpasses completed this Easter

April 6, 2021



A huge civil engineering project to build two new routes underneath the busy Chiltern main line has been completed this Easter.

A £12.3m investment saw two underpasses built in north west Bicester to help traffic and people move more easily around the town in the future.

Over a 100 hour railway closure between 2-5 April, railway lines were ripped up and 21,000 tonnes of railway embankment were removed so two prefabricated underpass structures, with a combined weight of 2,100 tonnes*, could be slowly driven into the new gaps by a transporter vehicle.

Video released today (Tuesday 6 April) shows the painstaking moments the new underpasses for pedestrians and vehicles were moved into position before 400 metres of track could be relaid above so passenger and freight services could resume again as normal this morning.

The £12.3m investment is being delivered by Network Rail and Story Contracting on behalf of Homes England, Oxfordshire County Council and Cherwell District Council.

Dave Penney, Network Rail's Central route director, said: "This £12.3m investment in Bicester to create two new routes under the railway will not only benefit the flow of people and traffic, but also help the both local councils' regeneration vision. It's a great example of how the rail industry can work in partnership with local authorities to unlock opportunities and growth for communities."

Eleni Jordan, commercial and customer strategy director at Chiltern Railways, said: "We're delighted that this project has been successfully completed. Chiltern Railways and Network Rail have worked hard to minimise disruption for our customers across the Easter weekend."

"These improvements in Bicester will have a positive impact on the local area and we are sure our customers will benefit from the new underpasses."

Robert Jolley, assistant director for growth and economy at Cherwell District Council, said: "This has been a key project for the development of Bicester Garden Town, and is an extraordinary example of multi-agency working bringing significant key players together with a clear, common purpose. It has also involved the productive use of both Growth Deal and other funding, to deliver large-scale positive changes for our communities."

"Working with partners, we have unlocked important land to the north west of Bicester, creating accessible walking and cycling routes for our future residents to enjoy."

More essential railway upgrades are planned over the early May Bank holiday weekend between 1-3 May.

Passengers are advised to check www.nationalrail.co.uk or with their train operator to see how their journeys could be impacted.

Meanwhile, travellers are reminded they must continue to follow government guidance to control the spread of coronavirus.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/coronavirus-covid-19-safer-travel-guidance-for-passengers

Other key statistics from the project

- The railway was closed for a total of 100 hours to drive the underpasses underneath the railway line.
- Trial lifts of the structures took place 2 weeks in advance
- 21,000 tonnes of earth were moved during railway closure to make way for the new underpasses
- 6,500 tonnes of back fill material was used once they are in position
- A Mammoet self-propelled modular transporter (SPMT) safely drove the two underpasses into place
- Temporary propping supported both structures while they were installed
- 400m railway track was removed and upgraded once the underpasses were in place
- Extensive temporary work to divert cables above and below the ground along the railway lines took place in advance of the work

Photo credit: Network Rail