

Up, up and away: 1960s West Coast main line railway flyover has lift off

May 1, 2020



Huge sections of a concrete railway flyover are being lifted out by some of the largest cranes in Europe to build the first direct rail link between Oxford, Bedford, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury in more than 50 years.

'Bletchley flyover' was built in the early 1960s and allows trains travelling from West to East to cross over the West Coast main line.

But now 14 of the flyover's 37 spans need to be dismantled and rebuilt to modern standards for the East West Rail project*.

Preparatory removals of lineside equipment and overhead electric lines has been taking place for a year, with work ramping up at Easter to drill and cut out the existing concrete flyover's spans.

Weighing in at a hefty 295 tonnes, the first was 'Span 17' which was split into two and removed on 22 April.

The first sections of the flyover are being dismantled without the need to close the railway.

Eight sections which cross directly over the West Coast main line **will cause it to be closed between the 2-3, 8-10 and 23-25 May** for the rest of the flyover to be removed.

People who need to travel over these weekends are advised to check www.nationalrail.co.uk to see how travel is being impacted.

Tim Shoveller, managing director for Network Rail's North West and Central region, said: "This is a major milestone for East West Rail – a new railway which will transform connectivity and journey times across the heart of the country. It promises to provide a greener, low carbon transport system which will bring huge benefits to passengers and businesses – driving economic growth and creating opportunities for housing and new jobs."

Jeff Booth, project leader for 2C, said: "My thanks to the team and everyone involved in the planning and execution of this hugely significant lift for the project. As the first span to be removed, the first significant lift we have done, and as a precursor to the removal of Span 19 in a few weeks' time, the pressure was on but we were able to completely remove the span from the structure safely and successfully as per our plan."

Passengers should continue following Government guidelines around the use of public transport during the coronavirus pandemic, and only travel if they have to.

*Once complete, phase 2 of East West Rail would connect communities and businesses between Oxford and Bedford, and Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, with:

- Two trains per hour each way between Oxford and Milton Keynes
- One train per hour each way between Oxford and Bedford
- One train per hour each way between Milton Keynes and Aylesbury

The new railway will also connect the Great Western main line, Chiltern main line, West Coast main line and Midland main line – providing passengers with much-improved cross-country rail links from East to West.

This would help create jobs, boost economic growth, encourage people out of their cars and onto public transport and enable sustainable housing development for generations to come.

Photo credit: Network Rail