

# Work to preserve and improve the Island Line's historic Ryde Pier to begin this autumn

September 23, 2022



**Network Rail** and **South Western Railway (SWR)** are set to begin a complex programme of vital maintenance and improvements on Ryde Pier, to keep trains on the Isle of Wight running long into the future.

In a line closure between Ryde Esplanade and Ryde Pier Head, beginning on Sunday 30 October and ending in Spring 2023, Network Rail engineers will strengthen the pier and extend its life by up to 60 years. SWR will also be carrying out work at the same time, making efficient use of the closure.

In stark contrast to today's modern design and construction methods, the railway structure of the pier was built between 1878 and 1880 by Victorian engineers. After nearly 150 years of harsh environmental conditions, which have caused parts of the structure to deteriorate, it now needs major refurbishment and repairs.

Mark Killick, Network Rail's Wessex Route Director, said: "We're pleased to finally start work on Ryde Pier, which after 142 years of service needs a lot of maintenance to support SWR's Island Line services going forward."

“Planning this work has been very challenging as we’ve had to work around other improvements to the Island Line whilst trying to understand the condition of the structure. Our engineers now have a very complex programme of work to deliver, made more difficult by the pier’s different construction methods and the seasons they’ll be working in.

“Our aim is to have everything finished in the Spring of next year and we’re grateful to customers for their patience during what we know will be a disruptive closure.”

Claire Mann, SWR’s Managing Director, said: “During our improvement programme in 2021, which allowed us to introduce the first new trains on the Island Line for more than 30 years, engineers surveyed Ryde Pier and discovered major work was needed to continue to run trains.

“We’ve worked closely with Network Rail to ensure the repairs needed can be carried out whilst causing the least amount of disruption possible, as we know this is an important link from the Island to ferry services bound for the mainland.

“We’re sorry for the inconvenience that this closure will cause, however we are making the most of the opportunity available to us by carrying out work that will give our customers smoother and more reliable journeys.”

SWR will operate a shuttle bus service between Ryde Pier Head and Ryde Esplanade during the closure. Full details will be announced in the coming weeks.

The 686-metre-long pier is split into six ‘zones’ which were built using several different forms of construction. There have also been both major and emergency repairs in the last 60 years. As a result, engineers will have to use a variety of methods to repair the pier, with a combination of both partial replacements and full refurbishments of the metal and timber structure.

*Photo credit: Network Rail*