

# Work underway on major new gateway for Plymouth

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Work has started on the main concourse of Plymouth railway station as part of a huge package to completely transform this key entrance to the city. The first phase of the concourse is now underway and changes include doubling the amount of gates at the ticket line to improve the flow of people in and out of the platform areas.

Intercity Place now has hoardings around the site featuring the faces of staff and students at the University of Plymouth.

This is in advance of preparatory works taking place in the building, which will ultimately see it refurbished to house the University's School of Allied Health Professions, and School of Nursing and Midwifery. The University has entered into a long lease for Intercity Place with Network Rail and will be undertaking a full internal and external transformation of the building.

This will include creating a new façade and then, internally, specialist teaching facilities including simulated wards, immersive care and home simulation teaching facilities.

Earlier this year, the Brunel Plaza project was awarded an additional £4.17 million of Get Building Funding for Phase 2 which entails a wholesale refurbishment of the tired and dated entrance which has not had any significant investment since the 1980s. The façade will be upgraded, more modern shopping space created and more self-service ticket banks will be installed.

On the other side of the ticket line, there are plans to create a new waiting area to shield passengers from the rain and cold Plymouth has from time to time. The main entrance will also be moved closer to Intercity Place.

A new hotel and multi-storey car park, and improvements to public areas and links to the city centre are also in the pipeline.

Complex legal and funding agreements had to be signed in order to make the programme of works happen with funding agreements with GWR to move Cross Country catering from Intercity House as well as relocate the GWR driver training simulators.

Not only will Brunel Plaza have a whole new feel, but part of the project is to significantly upgrade infrastructure to improve public and sustainable transport connectivity on key commuter routes. As part of the successful Transforming Cities Fund, there are also plans to upgrade the public realm creating a new pedestrianised plaza area and better pedestrian and cycle links to and from the city centre.

Head of Public Affairs for GWR Jane Jones said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Plymouth City Council, the University, Network Rail and both Cornwall and Heart of South West LEPs. The regeneration of Brunel Plaza will mean a much improved welcome to the city, and it is great to see the driver simulators in their new position, ready for the next stage of work in the development.”

Karl Tucker, chair of Heart of the SW LEP, said: “This scheme will transform the station precinct and improve accessibility, capacity and the whole passenger experience for the 2.5 million people that travel through it every year. As the busiest railway station in the Heart of the South West, it is a key transport hub for our area and provides an important gateway to Plymouth. We’re delighted the LEP has been able to support the scheme with funding from the Growth Deal and it’s great to see the progress being made on the ground.”

Meanwhile, council leader Tudor Evans got a taste of life in the hot seat, testing the new train driver simulator at Plymouth’s station, following the relocation of the facility.

The driver simulator building has moved to the east of the site and houses GWR train simulators for training drivers on the new long distance Intercity Express Trains and Castle Class trains that operate local and regional services. The simulators teach drivers how to control the different types of train before they start in cab training. They also allow qualified drivers the chance to practice driving scenarios or analyse incidents.

Council leader Tudor Evans OBE said: “We are changing the entire look and feel of the station. Bit by bit, we are relocating buildings, knocking parts down or redeveloping others to utterly transform Plymouth station.

“Instead of walking out of the concourse to face a concrete 1970s car park, people will be walking out to a buzzing open plaza with shops and offices. It’s an epic project. We have been talking about these plans now for a few years but now, now we are seeing work on the ground and I couldn’t be happier.”

The building was moved as part of a complex puzzle that is underway which will see the creation of Brunel Plaza.

*Photo credit: Plymouth Council*