



Department for Transport

From the Permanent Secretary

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Richard Cooke

Clerk, Committee of Public Accounts
[sent via email]

Dear Richard,

Progress on the South West Rail Resilience Programme

In the Department's October 2019 response to the Public Account Committee's July 2019 report on Transport Infrastructure in the South West, we committed to write to you updating you on the progress with the South West Rail Resilience Programme at Dawlish and Teignmouth, how Network Rail is working to resolve any local disagreements and the latest schedule for completion of the Programme.

We are absolutely committed to improving the long-term resilience of the railway line between Exeter and Newton Abbot. Work started during the Summer on a new sea wall at Dawlish. £80m has been provided by the Government for the two phases of the sea wall construction.

Dawlish Sea Wall Phase One: Kennaway Tunnel to the Colonnades

Following preparatory work during spring and summer, Network Rail and their contractors BAM Nuttall commenced the installation of pre-cast concrete foundation sections in October and this month are expected to install the first vertical facing panel sections of the wall. The work is scheduled to be completed in Spring 2020.

Local concerns that were raised regarding the height and design of the wall around the time of the Prior Approval application to Teignbridge District Council have abated since construction commenced. Network Rail has installed information boards on site to keep the community apprised of progress.

Dawlish Sea Wall Phase Two: Colonnades to Coastguard's Ramp

The second phase of the work will extend the new sea wall from Colonnades to Coastguard's Ramp, including Dawlish Station. This phase is currently in design and will require local authority consent for any changes affecting the station, which is Grade 2 listed. Following the local concerns raised during the first phase referred above, Network Rail has set up a stakeholder liaison group to help build consensus for the Phase 2 scheme ahead of applications for listed building and other consents. Subject to the necessary consents being forthcoming, work is currently expected to start on site in Spring 2021 with an expected completion in 2022.

Other Rail Resilience Improvements

Network Rail is continuing to develop further solutions to improve the resilience of the railway in this area. This includes protection for the railway from rockfall between the tunnels west of Dawlish, and from cliff landslides along the coast north of Teignmouth. This section of the railway was closed for six weeks following a landslide in March 2014, when 25,000 tonnes of material from the cliffs fell and blocked the railway line.

To prevent further line closures Network Rail are considering what is needed to better protect this area from damage caused by the sea during extreme weather. Network Rail's proposed solution between Teignmouth and Holcombe/Parsons Tunnel involves a realignment of the railway to enable buttresses to be placed at the foot of the cliffs. This will require them to submit a Transport and Works Act Order (TWAO).

Network Rail undertook a first round of public consultation on the Parsons Tunnel to Teignmouth scheme from 10 June to 15 July 2019 to hear views on its proposals. There is some local opposition to the scheme with concerns about the impact upon the beach at Holcombe. Network Rail is continuing to engage with local communities and interest groups to allow it to refine plans before presenting revised proposals for a second round of public consultation. This will take place in the next few months, ahead of a planned TWAO application in 2020.

Funding for delivery of these further elements will be subject to the production of a robust business cases, in accordance with the principles of the Rail Network Enhancements Pipeline.

I trust that this update is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bernadette Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the letter 'y'.

Bernadette Kelly CB
Permanent Secretary