

# First phase of Dawlish seawall completed, securing South West's rail links

- first phase of new seawall at Dawlish completed, protecting Isambard Kingdom Brunel's historic rail route in the South West
- milestone moment forms part of government's £80 million investment to improve resilience of railway following severe storms in 2014
- Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris visits new £25 million structure, preserving panoramic views for pedestrians and passengers, and an upgraded depot in Exeter

The completion of the first phase of a new seawall at Dawlish ensures an integral rail link for passengers and business across the South West is protected for "generations to come", Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris announced today (25 September 2020).

Visiting the site to officially open the new £25 million structure on the seafront west of Dawlish station, the minister saw the first phase of the £80 million scheme designed to create a more resilient railway at an exposed location, which was severely damaged in storms in 2014.

The new structure – which runs from Colonnade underpass, west of Dawlish station, to Boat Cove – will protect 360 metres of railway and homes behind it. Constructed after detailed consultation with the local community, the design is focused on preserving the panoramic views and access to the coast for residents and tourists, as well as ensuring passengers and businesses can rely on a secure, reliable service.

The Rail Minister also visited a train maintenance depot at Exeter, which has been expanded in partnership with Network Rail and train operator GWR to accommodate an increase in its fleet size in the Devon and Cornwall area.

The £53 million upgrade helps deliver more seats on more frequent services for passengers, improving service reliability and capacity for passengers across the region.

Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said:

Our investment in this new seawall will provide a resilient railway for generations to come, delivering for the thousands of passengers that rely upon this vital link every day, and the residents whose homes and businesses must be protected.

This rigorous set of defences forms part of our ambitious plans to deliver reliable, punctual journeys across Devon and Cornwall, improving connections between communities to help the South West

build back better, boosting the local economy and tourism.

Network Rail's plans for the second phase of the seawall, which extend it for a further 415 metres eastwards from Colonnades to Coastguards breakwater and include accessibility improvements to Dawlish station, have now been approved and work is expected to start next month, taking around 2 years to complete.