

News story: Resilience work on key South West rail route firmly on track, says Rail Minister

- Jo Johnson meets Peninsula Rail Task Force to discuss Dawlish works
- Network Rail announces next phase of key resilience works on the line
- minister reiterates government commitment to improving South West rail links

Rail Minister Jo Johnson today (12 July 2018) re-affirmed the government's commitment to improving the rail network for passengers in the South West during a visit to the region.

Meeting with representatives from the Peninsula Rail Task Force (PRTF) he welcomed the news that Network Rail was ready to launch the next phase of resilience work on the route between Teignmouth and Dawlish, as design studies by world-leading engineers were nearing completion.

The line between Teignmouth and Dawlish was badly damaged by storms in 2014. Since then, the government has provided Network Rail with more than £15 million in funding to enable engineers to carry out detailed investigations into how best to protect the line from extreme weather.

Jo Johnson said:

We are investing in the biggest modernisation of the Great Western Railway since Brunel built it more than 150 years ago, giving passengers what they want: faster, more frequent and more comfortable services.

But it is vital we find a permanent solution to the problems at Dawlish because it is a crucial link for the people and the economy of the South West.

With funding from government, world-leading engineers have been carrying out detailed ground investigation to understand what is happening to the cliffs and coastline in 3 key areas around Dawlish and Teignmouth. These comprehensive studies are nearing completion, enabling Network Rail to show later this year how they will take the next steps to protect the railway line and coastline.

Investment on the Great Western Railway also includes 29 new Hitachi AT300 trains, at a cost of £361 million, which will serve the London to Exeter and Plymouth to Penzance routes later this year, meaning nearly 25% extra seats for passengers. There will also be main line signalling enhancements increasing capacity and improving journey times.

On his visit to the region, Mr Johnson also met with St Ives MP Derek Thomas to discuss the movement of goods on passenger services between Cornwall and London.