

Full train timetable to resume between Manchester and Bolton

10 November 2015

Network Rail has announced that services on the route between Manchester and Bolton will return to a full timetable from Monday 14 December.*

As part of Network Rail's Railway Upgrade Plan, Farnworth Tunnel, near Bolton, is being enlarged to enable it to house two electrified lines. Following the breakthrough on 25 October, Network Rail has continued to work with train operators to reinstate normal passenger services as soon as possible.

A weekend closure of the route – on Saturday 12 and Sunday 13 December – will see the new tracks brought in to use through the new tunnel. There will initially be a speed restriction on this new section of railway, which will be removed after some further work in the New Year. This will require an additional closure of the railway in January. Full details will be confirmed as soon as possible.

Nick Spall, route delivery director at Network Rail said: "Farnworth Tunnel is an extremely complex engineering challenge being delivered as part of our Railway Upgrade Plan. Breaking through to complete the tunnel was a key milestone for the project. There is more work to do before we can bring this new section of railway into use. This will require a short closure of the railway.

"We have worked closely with Northern Rail and First TransPennine Express to plan the work to cause the least amount of disruption to passengers. I would like to thank passengers and local residents for their patience so far."

Nick Donovan, managing director, First TransPennine Express: "The project at Farnworth Tunnel is essential to enabling the electrification and longer term improvement to capacity over the route. It is good to see that the important milestone of completing tunnelling work has been achieved. I would like to thank customers for their continued patience over the next few months when there will be further periods of disruption while this project is completed."

Alex Hynes, managing director for Northern Rail: "Returning a fully functional railway to our customers is the most important element of this complex engineering project. Train services running on two lines with increased capacity are great news and we would like to thank our customers for their patience."

To complete the project Network Rail needed to find a date when specialist equipment is available, and balance this with the need to minimise disruption to passengers. The two stage solution was agreed by the rail industry after considering all the options available to them.

Over 30,000 tonnes of material have been removed from the 270m-long tunnel, with 1,940 concrete sections put in place.

* While trains have been running bi-directionally on a single line, services have been less frequent but more carriages have been added to trains to maintain the usual level of capacity. Returning to a normal timetable from Monday 14 December will enable Northern Rail to restore train service frequency and station calls as well as provide longer trains.