

Brunel's 'Bristol Old Station' Now in Network Rail Ownership



The Old Station in Bristol, designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, opened in 1840.

The iconic, Grade I listed 'Bristol Old Station', which was Bristol's first railway station when it opened in 1840 as the western terminus of the Great Western Railway from London Paddington, has been acquired by Network Rail. Designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel, it remains one of the oldest surviving railway stations in Britain. Its acquisition from Bristol City Council allows Network Rail to bring the building back into railway ownership for the first time since rail privatisation in the mid-1990s.

Brunel's Old Station is currently home to Engine Shed, a business incubator which supports a cluster of innovative start-ups, and the Passenger Shed, an events space which hosts a wide range of events including exhibitions and weddings. Network Rail's Signalling Innovation Group used the building for its annual conference in February 2020.



The passenger shed of Brunel's Old Station in Bristol.

Network Rail plans to maintain current commercial uses of the building, while implementing a programme to maintain and restore the Grade 1 listed facilities. Its aspirations for the buildings will complement proposals for the wider station area under the emerging Bristol Temple Quarter masterplan.

Stuart Kirkwood, Network Rail's acting group property director, said: "We are very pleased to have brought this iconic building back into railway ownership. This is a landmark site with historical significance for the nation and for Network Rail as a company. We are looking forward to revitalising the building for the enjoyment of passengers, tenants and the local community. This refurbishment is part of our wider strategy to create great places for business and communities to thrive, supporting economic growth and regeneration in towns and cities across the UK."

Mike Gallop, Western Route managing director, added: "It is an honour to have this historic building in Network Rail ownership. The building deserves the best care it can get, and we are planning to do just that. I trust that Brunel would be pleased to know that his first station in Bristol is back where it belongs – within the railway family that will care and cherish it."