BridgeZone Ltd

Dawlish Seawall
Railway Retaining Examination
Rope Access
Client: Owen Williams

The infamous sea wall along the classic red Devon sandstone cliffs between Dawlish and Teignmouth has made the news on many occasions. When the South-westerly gales lash the south coast this granite and limestone structure catches the full force of Mother Nature at her worst. BridgeZone are regularly on-hand to see that any damage is picked up early.

The wall was constructed in the mid 1800s as part of Brunel's Great Western Railway and supported his famous "Atmospheric Railway" for some years before rats and nature's fury conspired to ensure that this engineering novelty was consigned to the history books. Now the main line cross country and local services can frequently be seen racing along the foot of the cliffs – a distinctive scene on this part of the coast.

Any failure (or potential failure) of this section is disastrous for the railway network as it cuts off all lines to the west of Exeter. Before the 1950s there was an alternative route, the DAC line which cuts inland between Exeter and Plymouth but a section of this was lost to coastal erosion cutting off any chance of maintaining the service during problems with the seawall. This means that a regular annual regime of inspection is required in order to ensure the ongoing operational status of this vital link.

Access to the wall is only possible on foot meaning that BridgeZone's lightweight and mobile teams of industrial abseiling engineers come into their own for supplying our clients with efficient and meaningful detailed reporting. For the last few years BridgeZone have carried out the work whilst maintaining a full operational service on the mainline.