

Trains cancelled over fake bridge collapse image

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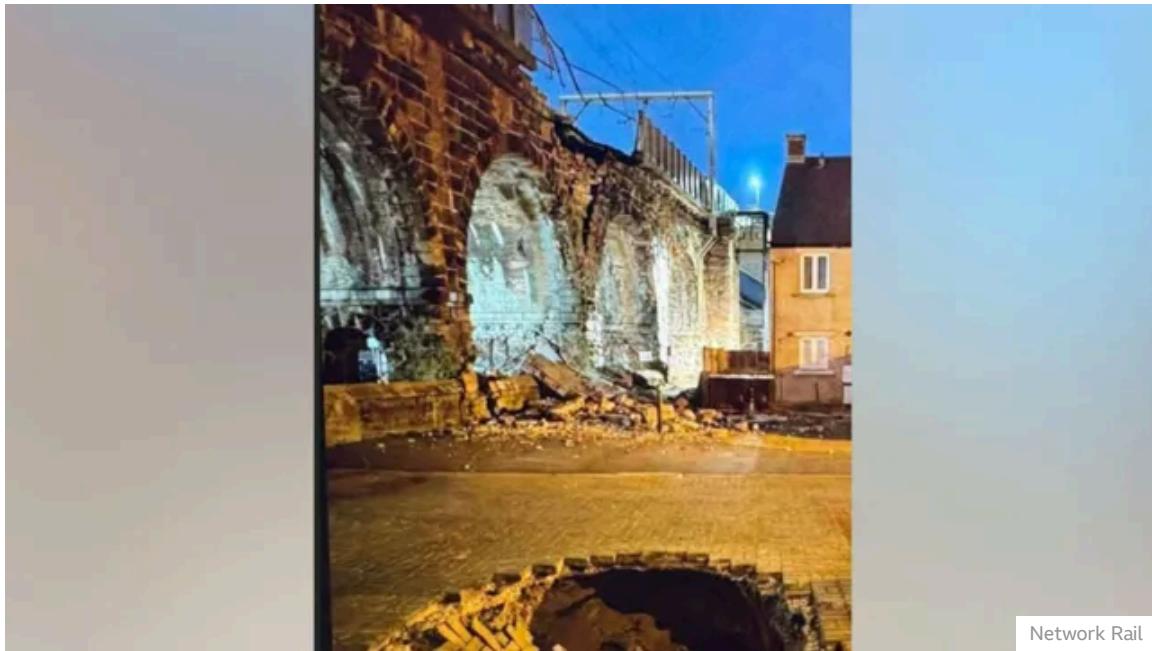
A photo taken by a BBC North West Tonight reporter showed the bridge is undamaged

Trains were halted after a suspected AI-generated picture that seemed to show major damage to a bridge appeared on social media following an earthquake.

The tremor, which struck on Wednesday night, was felt across Lancashire and the southern Lake District.

Network Rail said it was made aware of the image which appeared to show major damage to Carlisle Bridge in Lancaster at 00:30 GMT and stopped rail services across the bridge while safety inspections were carried out.

A BBC journalist ran the image through an AI chatbot which identified key spots that may have been manipulated.



Network Rail

Network Rail said it was made aware that the image was on social media

Network Rail said the railway line was fully reopened at around 02:00 GMT and it has urged people to "think about the serious impact it could have" before creating or sharing hoax images.

"The disruption caused by the creation and sharing of hoax images and videos like this creates a completely unnecessary delay to passengers at a cost to the taxpayer," a spokesperson said.

"It adds to the high workload of our frontline teams, who work extremely hard to keep the railway running smoothly," the spokesperson said.

"The safety of rail passengers and staff is our number one priority and we will always take any safety concerns seriously."

The British Transport Police said it was "made aware" of the situation but there was no ongoing investigation into the incident.

Network Rail said 32 services including passenger and freight trains were delayed because of hoax.

A spokesperson for the rail provider said a mix of passenger and freight train would have been impacted.

They said some of them would have been directly stopped or slowed while it checked the lines, but a lot of the trains were delayed as a result of earlier services still being in their path.

The spokesperson said many of them would have been local but because of the length of the West Coast Main Line some trains were delayed as far north as Scotland.



A BBC North West reporter visited the bridge today and confirmed it was undamaged. Railway expert Tony Miles said due to the timing of the incident, very few passengers will have been impacted by the hoax as the services passing through at that time were primarily freight and sleeper trains.

"They generally go slow so as not to disturb the passengers trying to sleep - this means they have a bit of leeway to go faster and make up time if they encounter a delay," he said.

"It's more the fact that Network Rail will have had to mobilise a team to go and check the bridge which could impact their work for days."

He urged people to consider hoaxes like this could have on real people.

"If they actually did delay a train it could have impacted someone who had to get to a medical appointment, or a flight or a funeral.

"It may seem like a game, but anyone who's thinking of doing this should consider how it will impact real people."

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