

Britain's railway stations go purple to celebrate disabled people worldwide

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Rays of purple light beam from railway stations across the country yesterday as the rail industry joins the global #PurpleLightUp movement and celebrates the contribution of disabled people around the world.

Some of Network Rail's most iconic stations, including London Waterloo, London Liverpool Street, Bristol Temple Meads and Leeds were lit up in the internationally recognised colour for disability, to highlight the railways' commitment to diversity and inclusion.

This year the coronavirus pandemic has brought many new challenges to the rail industry and has impacted both staff and passengers. Wearing face-coverings and social distancing have made travelling more challenging, especially for passengers with non-visible disabilities. Network Rail has introduced measures to ensure everyone can travel safely and with confidence throughout the pandemic. These have included:

- The sunflower lanyard scheme a discrete way of recognising those with a non-visible disability, or may be unable to wear a face-covering. More than 10,000 lanyards and exemption cards have been issued to Network Rail managed stations.
- In stations hand sanitiser has been provided at varying heights
- Throughout the pandemic Network Rail has continued to provide assistance to those travellers who need extra support. Partitions have been put up on mobility buggies to keep passengers safe.
- For Network Rail employees, who've had to adjust to working at home, Network Rail launched a neurodiversity pack which includes coping strategies and webinars on a range of topics, managing stress, fatigue and managing home-schooling children while managing workloads.

The rail infrastructure company employs more than 800 disabled people and aims to have at least ten per cent of leadership positions filled by disabled people by 2024¹. To attract and retain more talented disabled people within the organisation, the company is working with Evenbreak, an award-winning social enterprise, run by and for disabled people. Network Rail has also been recognised as a finalist in the RIDI (Recruitment Industry Disability Initiative) awards 2020 for their autism recruitment programme.

Loraine Martins, director of diversity and inclusion at Network Rail said: "We've made some progress towards creating a railway that is a suitable environment for everyone. We are passionate about having an inclusive culture, so that every single passenger can travel confidently and independently and get the right assistance when needed. And we've worked particularly hard over recent months to ensure that disabled passengers get a good service during this difficult time.

"We know there is still more to do which is why we have set ourselves some ambitious targets that we will be working towards between now and 2024."

#PurpleLightUp is a simple, powerful declaration of solidarity by, and with, disabled people.

To find out more, visit: networkrail.co.uk/purple

Photo credit: Network Rail

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