Business creates QR code mechanism to protect against cyber attacks

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A QR code mechanism has been created to make sure passengers can access live departure times if network information systems are hit by a cyber attack that sends station screens dark.

It's creator, Zipabout, says critical rail network infrastructure, including passenger information systems, are identified as a potential UK target of Russian cyber-attacks in response to sanctions, although there is currently no specific threat.

With this and other potential threats in mind, it Zipabout has made QR code packs available to all their rail operator clients, including EMR and LNER, for every UK station.

Scanning the QR codes connects passengers to National Rail Enquiries or a local train operator and provides them with personalised travel information via Messenger without the need to use another app or website. It is a quick and easy way of accessing real-time rail journey information, including the next three trains leaving the station to a chosen destination, disruption alerts and multi-leg planning. The service will also soon be available through WhatsApp.

The full list of QR codes can also be found on Zipabout's website and passengers can search by individual station name – https://www.zipabout.com/tools/live-departure-boards

Alex Froom, CEO of Zipabout, said: "QR codes have become well recognised over the course of the last two years, and are a simple but effective tool to keep rail passengers in the loop if their usual sources of information, such as station screens or operator websites, go down. We've made them available both via train operators and our website so in the unlikely event of a cyber-attack, we can keep everything moving."

Zipabout information personalisation technology powers the Alert Me service provided through National Rail Enquiries as well as information services for other train operators such as East Midlands Rail, c2c and LNER.