

Chiltern Railways reveals the region's busiest train services as new tech launches to alert rail passengers before they leave home

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New data published by Chiltern Railways reveals the busiest train services since the lockdown was eased.

The data comes as train operators launch new technology that will mean rail passengers along the Chiltern route can be alerted to busy trains and stations before they leave home, helping them stagger their journeys and keep safe while travelling.

The busiest train services are:

- 1646 Marylebone – Gerrards Cross
- 1715 Marylebone – Aylesbury
- 1549 Gerrards Cross – Marylebone
- 0602 Aylesbury – Marylebone
- 1748 Marylebone – Gerrard's Cross

To help people plan their journeys to avoid the busiest services and stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic, train companies are launching new technology that will alert passengers to busy trains and stations before they leave home.

A new system from National Rail will indicate to people who are searching for a journey if a specific train or station is looking busy, including those operated by Chiltern Railways. It will take operational messages about busy trains and stations that are sent by frontline rail staff to control rooms and display these in

passenger-friendly language on journey planning websites and apps.

People will see a red or yellow warning triangle when they search their journey and by clicking on it, will be able to find out more information and advice.

This journey information will be complemented by a new information service that will update passengers on how disruption and overcrowding will affect their journey. This new technology will also provide alternative travel options, helping people maintain social distancing as they continue to make essential journeys. Passengers can sign up to alerts from National Rail on 'Alert me by Messenger', with updates on WhatsApp and SMS being made available over the coming weeks.

The introduction of the technology was announced by Transport Secretary Grant Shapps during the government press conference on Saturday 23 May. The personalised information service, developed by tech start-up Zipabout, uses a range of anonymised data, including journey planning data, to predict how busy a train is likely to be by analysing recent information and comparing it with historic trends. This in turn allows National Rail Enquiries not only to warn passengers of busy services, allowing them to plan and stagger their journeys, but also to suggest quieter options or alternative routes they can take.

With social distancing measures significantly reducing capacity on board services, train companies say that the new technology will play an important role in helping them to manage the space available to travel. The announcement comes as more people are expected to return to the rail network next week with more businesses set to reopen in June.

Rail companies, government and technology companies are also working together to build on this new technology by looking at all other available data sources to ensure passenger information is as up to date as possible.

Mary Hewitt, interim Managing Director at Chiltern Railways said: "At Chiltern Railways we're running as many services as possible where it is safe to do so. The health of our customers and staff is of utmost importance to us. Social distancing measures means that capacity onboard our services has been significantly reduced and we hope that this technology will help make travelling for those customers that do need to travel easier and safer. However, we continue to ask that passengers only use public transport for essential journeys and to wear face coverings when travelling."

Photo credit: Chiltern Railways