

In The News: 17th June

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Automatic de-icing concrete on platforms and a rapid seat reservation-swapping service could soon be making journeys easier by banishing slippery surfaces in winter and guaranteeing passengers a seat.

That's the announcement by the Transport Secretary Grant Shapps following a national competition to make the railways cleaner, greener and more passenger-friendly.

The Department for Transport, in partnership with Innovate UK, has awarded 25 pioneering projects a share of £9.4 million in the 2020 First of a Kind competition.

Among those to receive the funding includes the University of Birmingham and Porterbrook who will use the £400,000 to develop the detailed final production design and testing of the HydroFLEX train – the UK's first hydrogen-powered train.

[Click here to see the full list of the pioneering projects.](#)

It's been revealed that the government has approved £3.5 billion pounds of additional expenditure to ensure vital rail services continue to operate.

In answer to a question from Gateshead MP Ian Mearns, the Rail Minister Chris Heaton-Harris said of this additional expenditure, £2.9 billion relates to the 2020/21 financial year.

However, it is not yet possible to provide an estimate of the total cost incurred to date.

Lancashire County Council's cabinet has approved the acquisition of the ex-Skelmersdale College for £1 to create a long-awaited public transport link for the town.

That's according to an article in Wigan Today which also says a further £2 million has been allocated to demolish the buildings and cover any additional costs of preparing the location to be developed into a train station.

Finally, and a Welsh distillery which originally had plans to open a gin school in the cellars of its 17th century castle, is instead providing a vital lifeline for front line rail workers.

Transport for Wales has purchased thousands of litres of hand sanitiser from Hensol Castle to support its staff after the company started to produce highly effective hand sanitiser for industrial use.

[Click here for more details.](#)

Photo credit: HydroFLEX, the University of Birmingham and Porterbrook

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