

No hurdles for Grand National racegoers thanks to Merseyrail

April 16, 2024



More than 103,000 journeys were made by racegoers travelling to and from The Grand National Festival at Aintree Racecourse thanks to a dedicated timetable that saw a seven-and-a-half-minute service.

Merseyrail once again supported the world-famous sporting festival, giving away 5,000 pairs of its famous flip flops, delivering live music and entertainment to customers at Moorfields, Liverpool Central and Aintree stations – as well as introducing the extra services to get people to and from the event.

The plan for this year was the most comprehensive ever put on by the train company, with a massive increase in capacity. More than 8,500 customers an hour were able to be transported quickly and safely at the busiest times, thanks to eight car trains being used at the Grand National Festival for the first time ever.

Additional staff supported customers at the main stations and the network delivered a reliable and punctual service throughout the festival.

Three charities held collections at Merseyrail stations during the three-day festival, Woodlands Hospice, Centre 56 and Blackburne House, helping to raise thousands of pounds for these good causes.

Commenting on X (formerly known as Twitter), @dottyslipper said: "Literally love the Merseyrail experience on Grand National Day. Highlight of my day!"

Shelagh Kelly Redmond commented on Facebook: "Well done to everyone at Merseyrail. Great organising with so many people."

Jacqui Parkinson said: "I was at Central station on Friday morning taking my grandson to Southport, the atmosphere at the station was brilliant, well done Merseyrail, so well organised."

Martin Grice commented: "Very well organised, trains reliable, plenty of friendly, helpful staff and great entertainment. Such a great advert for the city with so many people having a positive experience visiting the area. The welcome passengers get on race days means Merseyrail is very much part of the Grand National experience."

The increase of capacity and frequency of trains to Aintree was crucial to be able to meet the huge numbers of racegoers. Merseyrail worked closely with colleagues from The Jockey Club, British Transport Police, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Stadler, Carlisle Security, and Network Rail to ensure train operations ran smoothly throughout the three days.

Specialist Network Rail staff were in place throughout the three days to address any issues that arose during the event. Their preparation work included thermal imaging runs, additional inspections on crossover points, and reviews of track components. The work was carried out by mobile drones, ensuring that engineering staff were kept safe and rail infrastructure undisturbed while the inspections took place.

These checks were in addition to the normal inspections of the network that is undertaken throughout the year. But with an enhanced train service for the Grand National Festival, it was vital that the infrastructure was double-checked ahead of such a big event.

Neil Grabham, Merseyrail Managing Director, said: "It's always an honour to work with Aintree Racecourse and The Jockey Club to support the Grand National Festival. We're really proud of the fantastic customer service we have delivered for the 2024 Grand National Festival.

"It's a massive challenge for Merseyrail, but one that our staff rise to every year. Their expertise and professionalism ensured racegoers benefitted from our first-class transport network.

"There is a huge amount of preparation work that goes into providing our special service to The Grand National Festival each year. We work incredibly closely with colleagues at Network Rail, British Transport Police, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Stadler, Carlisle Security and The Jockey Club to ensure the best travel experience we can for racegoers.

"Merseyrail provides much more than a train service across the three days. Our customers love the atmosphere that we help to create with entertainment, music and charity activity at our stations. It's a

unique experience that for many is an integral part of attending the races.

“This is a collaborative effort, with many skilled workers coming together to help deliver one of the greatest sporting occasions in the world. Everyone at Merseyrail loves this event, and it was great to see so many managers and head office staff volunteer to support our fantastic stations teams, helping to ensure everyone had a great experience.

“We have received some lovely feedback from visitors to the region who were really impressed with Merseyrail. You can rest assured that we will be ready to support the Grand National Festival in 2025.”

Phil James, Network Rail’s North West route director, said: “I hope our passengers had a fantastic time at the Grand National. It was a pleasure to work with Merseyrail to make sure everyone could travel safely to Aintree.

“Our maintenance team in Liverpool carried out special drone inspections along the route to make sure we could provide a reliable service in advance of the Grand National festival. We also had extra response teams ready to go to address any issues as soon as possible. I’m pleased to say that passengers were kept safely on the move to and from Aintree throughout the three days.”