

Railway landmarks turn blue to celebrate key workers

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Network Rail have lit the iconic Britannia Bridge, Bristol Temple Meads station and stations in London blue to say thank you to NHS staff and other key workers – including frontline railway colleagues – who are continuing to operate a safe and reliable railway to support essential passenger journeys, and keep freight moving across the network.

The Network Rail-owned Britannia Bridge which spans the Menai Strait between Anglesey and the mainland carrying the railway line from Chester to Holyhead, was illuminated at 8pm on Thursday (23 April) to coincide with the nation's weekly Clap for Carers.

The lighting of the Grade II listed structure was supported by the Welsh Government – responsible for the A55 road also carried by the bridge – and rail industry partners from Transport for Wales and British Transport Police.

Originally designed by railway pioneer Robert Stephenson, Britannia Bridge recently celebrated its 170th anniversary. Completed in 1850, it was devastated by fire in 1970 and subsequently rebuilt as a combined road and rail bridge, using the masonry supports and iconic stone lions from Stephenson's

original structure.

Network Rail worked with a specialist team from Enlightened Ltd to deliver the illumination. Following the example set at Glasgow Central Station, the Royal Albert Bridge in Plymouth and Bristol Temple Meads station, this is the first-time rail infrastructure in Wales has been lit to mark Clap for Carers.

Bill Kelly, Network Rail's Route Director for Wales and Borders, said: "We are really proud of NHS staff and all key workers on the frontline against Coronavirus. We wanted to do something special to show our solidarity with them, as well as paying tribute to rail workers across Wales and Borders who have responded to this national emergency so magnificently.

"Passenger numbers are very low – which is fantastic as it means people are staying home to help save lives – but we continue to have a vital role: supporting essential journeys and moving freight across the network that is helping keep our supermarkets and pharmacies stocked with food and medicines."

Ken Skates, Minister for Economy, Transport and North Wales said: "The hard work, dedication and skill of individuals working to do all they can to provide crucial services and keep us safe and well through the Coronavirus crisis is an inspiration to us all. These people are helping keep critical services up and down the country in operation through enormous challenges and it's important that we take time out to say a public 'thank you' to each and every one."

James Price, CEO of Transport for Wales said: "I'd like to thank all our NHS staff and key workers who are truly dedicated and supporting the country in the fight against Covid19. Across the whole of our network we've seen a collaborative team approach and it's great to pay tribute to all those involved.

"We continue to urge all our customers to please stay at home and our recent figures reveal a 95% passenger number drop, which indicates that people are listening. We are currently running a reduced timetable to provide essential travel links for all our key workers and we've expanded our cleaning capabilities to ensure the safety of our customers and staff."

Andy Morgan, Chief Superintendent for British Transport Police in Wales added: "We're proud to support our partners in this well-deserved display of appreciation to those on the frontline of the fight against Coronavirus – from healthcare and retail workers to our officers and railway industry colleagues. I have always felt that they all do an amazing job, and perhaps something we as a society take for granted, but this situation has reminded everyone just how important they are to us.

"We're pleased to see the majority of people sticking to the Government guidelines – helping us to focus on getting key workers to where they need to be. We'd like to say a big thank you to those continuing to stay at home – we hope everyone enjoyed this colourful thank you."

Lighting up Bristol Temple Meads

The main entrance of Bristol Temple Meads station was lit up at 8pm to coincide with the national show of appreciation for everyone who works for the NHS as the country faces a challenging time battling coronavirus.

Staff at the station also came together to join the applause to pay tribute to NHS staff and all key workers.

Several measures have also been implemented at Bristol Temple Meads to ensure that social distancing is maintained to allow safer walking routes for those passengers who still need to use the railway to travel during this unprecedented time.

Staff have positioned vinyl stickers two metres apart across the floor in and around the station, including at the taxi queue, ticket office, staircases and ticket barriers.

Passengers are being reminded of keeping to the left-hand side when they are walking along the stairs and NHS posters have been displayed across the station as a constant reminder to ensure everyone is following safety guidelines.

Andy Phillips, Network Rail's station manager at Bristol Temple Meads, said: "We are really proud of all NHS workers for what they are doing every day throughout the coronavirus crisis.

"Lighting the front of such an iconic station like Bristol Temple Meads seemed like a fitting way to show our appreciation.

"The station will be lit in blue each evening throughout the crisis so every evening those travelling to and from work know just how appreciated they are.

"Elsewhere across the station we have placed vinyl stickers across the station floors which have been measured to be two metres apart. This will make it a lot easier for passengers to protect themselves when using the station for essential travel."

Lighting up London stations

London Waterloo and London Bridge stations were bathed in blue lights to show appreciation to those working to fight COVID-19 – many of whom travel to work through these stations every day – meanwhile a projection thanking our NHS heroes was shone onto the front of London Victoria and Charing Cross, and Charing Cross railway bridge was also turned blue.

NHS staff and other key workers who cannot work from home also heard the voice of Gary Lineker broadcast across the stations.

His message, recorded in his own time for free, said: “Thank you to all our NHS and key workers you are

the best, we love you all and we will be forever in your debt.”

Additional famous voices will be joining Gary in the coming days to give passengers a boost as they travel to and from work.

The iconic clock on the concourse at Waterloo, the western arcade at London Bridge and the façade of Clapham Junction also turned blue at 8pm, as station staff joined the nation in clapping to show support.

Sir Peter Hendy CBE, chair of Network Rail, said: “Network Rail is delighted to turn our stations and structures blue in support of the NHS, our public services (including our railways), and the brave and selfless people who deliver them 24/7. Thanks to all our colleagues who’ve made this happen.”

Nicole Cohen-Wray, interim director of stations for Network Rail Southern Region, said: “The NHS and other essential workers are doing an incredible job for our country and turning our stations blue to demonstrate our appreciation for their sacrifice is the least we can do.

“Our stations are normally some of the busiest in the country, but we are so pleased that people have listened to Public Health England advice to stay at home to save lives – it helps keep our staff and the people who hear and see these thank you messages safe.”

In a normal year Waterloo, Victoria, London Bridge and Charing Cross stations see around 245million passengers come and go – an average of 670,000 a day – but numbers are down by approximately 95% since the start of the coronavirus crisis.

Photo credit: Network Rail