

Scotland's Railway ready to keep passengers moving this autumn

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Scotland's Railway has launched one of its biggest autumn treatment programmes to keep tracks free of leaves and debris and make sure passengers stay on the move this autumn.

Building on the success of last year's autumn preparations – which saw train punctuality reach 91.3% compared with 86.1% in autumn 2019 – Scotland's Railway will be deploying additional specialist treatment trains and more on-track kit to treat the rails.

Every autumn, trees drop thousands of tonnes of leaves onto our infrastructure and these can break down into a slippery surface that can cause train wheels to lose grip – making it harder for them to stop quickly.

This can cause trains to overshoot signals or platforms and affect signalling systems – making it harder to track where trains are on the network.

Until December, our fleet of specialist rail-head treatment trains will be in operation around-the-clock, using high-pressure water jets to clean tracks before coating them with a special adhesive.

Last autumn, the treatment trains covered more than 65,000 miles of track across Scotland's Railway.

At a further 110 locations across the network, special 'traction gel applicators' have been installed to help train wheels maintain their grip on the rails, while teams of leaf-busting engineers will be located throughout the country to quickly tackle problem sites.

In depots, engineers will also be deployed to remove leaf debris from train wheels and in our control room specialist weather reports will be used to pinpoint how conditions will affect leaf-fall – allowing us to target our resources where they're most needed.

Liam Sumpter, Network Rail Scotland route director, said: "Leaves on the line can pose a real danger to the safe operation of the railway – affecting a train's wheels in a similar way to how black ice affects your car – and our teams will be working around-the-clock to make sure we keep passengers moving safely this autumn.

"We will be deploying special treatment trains to clean rails throughout autumn and have additional engineers ready to respond to problems as they occur.

"Last year we significantly reduced autumn-related delays for our customers and we are determined to continue to improve performance across Scotland's Railway this autumn too."

David Simpson, ScotRail operations director, said: "Each autumn, the weather creates challenging and difficult conditions across Scotland's Railway as leaves fall on the line and make the rails dangerously slippery, and this year is no different.

"That's why, along with our colleagues at Network Rail Scotland, we're working flat out to keep rails and train wheels clean to help minimise the impact the autumn weather has on our customers' journeys.

"We'll be doing everything we can to quickly address any problems that arise, to take preventative action wherever possible, and make sure that our customers are given good quality information."

Photo credit: Network Rail