

Seven thousand applications for one-off Birmingham signal box tours

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Organisers of one-off public tours of the former Birmingham New Street signal box have revealed that they received more than 7,000 applications for just 60 places on offer.

Network Rail has now contacted all lucky attendees by telephone to confirm their places and let them know what to expect on Friday 31 March.

Emails have now been sent to everyone to commiserate the thousands of people who were unsuccessful.

The North West and Central communications team, which is organising the tours in conjunction with signalling staff, has been overwhelmed by the level of interest to get the chance to go inside the Brutalist building.

The team also wanted to gently remind people not to turn up with any Eventbrite raffle ticket, which ceased to be valid after the random draw was made and the ballot closed on Friday 17 March.

Bethanie Hayton, Network Rail senior communications manager, said: "The response to our rare tours

inside this important piece of railway architecture has been fantastic and has completely blown us away. We have spoken to everyone who was lucky enough to be randomly selected for a place on the tours and we are looking forward to welcoming them in person next Friday.

“We thank everyone who took the time to apply but weren’t lucky enough to be drawn in the ballot. However, I’d please urge people who have not been phoned in person to please not to come on the day with any form of ticket. They are now void and we’d hate for anyone to make a wasted journey and be disappointed when we have to turn them away.”

At the building’s peak up to 1,200 trains were directed by its team of dedicated signallers every day – that’s tens of millions of trains over its operational life.

But last Christmas the 1960s analogue technology made way for digital when responsibility for all train movements through Britain’s busiest station outside of London was passed over to the West Midlands Signalling Centre in east Birmingham.

After the tours take place work will start on the next phase of the building’s life to become a training centre for the next generation of railway signallers.

To find out more about the history of Birmingham New Street station, visit <https://www.networkrail.co.uk/who-we-are/our-history/iconic-infrastructure/the-history-of-birmingham-new-street-station/>

Photo and video credit: Network Rail