

South Western Railway kicks off partnership with Non-League Day

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Operator **South Western Railway (SWR)** has become an official partner of **Non-League Day** – an annual event that sees football fans encouraged to support their local non-league teams while Premier League and Championship football is on pause.

The event was established in 2010 by SWR Guard James Doe, who had the idea while watching his beloved Queens Park Rangers play at non-league Tavistock Town in a pre-season friendly.

Over the last 14 years, James' event has grown dramatically, with more and more football fans watching local non-league fixtures while the clubs they support take a break.

Not only have non-league clubs seen bumper crowds on Non-League Day, but they have also grown their fan bases thanks to the increased publicity and awareness it generates.

The event has been such a success that, last year, James was invited to Bilbao as a guest of La Liga giants Athletic Bilbao, to help launch a similar initiative in the Basque Country.

After watching these achievements unfold, SWR was inspired to become an official partner of Non-League Day, helping to promote local fixtures and guide fans to games by travelling on its network.

This week, SWR has launched a marketing campaign to promote travel to non-league fixtures by train. At any one of SWR's 190 stations, customers can scan a QR code on a Non-League Day poster to access a map showing where their nearest local fixture.

Adverts will also be posted on social media, encouraging those on the SWR network to head to southwesternrailway.com/NLD and find out more about which teams are playing in their area.

Peter Williams, South Western Railway's Customer and Commercial Director, said: "We're very proud of our colleague James Doe and his achievements around Non-League Day, which is an event that fits perfectly with our commitment to support the communities we serve.

"Our partnership with Non-League Day will hopefully help to continue the momentum that James and his team have built up over the last 14 years, while encouraging football fans to take the train to a nearby game and support affordable, volunteer-led community football."

James Doe, Non-League Day founder and South Western Railway Guard, said: "It's really fantastic to have South Western Railway backing the campaign this year. The reach that this will have, spreading the message across the communities of the network, will be unparalleled. It's a huge moment for the campaign.

"It's important to support local football because it's the bedrock of our national game. Volunteer-led, community football creates so many opportunities for the community, which is a big part of what South Western Railway is about."

Arguably the biggest game of Non-League Day will be Eastleigh – managed by former Southampton goalkeeper Kelvin Davis – against Hartlepool, in the National League. The Spitfires' game takes place at the Silverlake Stadium, just a short walk from Southampton Airport Parkway station.

Among the other 25 matches on the network, Corinthian Casuals host Badshot Lea at their ground in Tolworth. The Casuals play their home games at The King George Recreation Ground, with SWR services running directly past it on the Chessington branch line.