

South Western Railway trials cutting-edge AI technology

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London Waterloo is trialling Artificial Intelligence that provides train information through British Sign Language (BSL).

Travellers who are deaf or have hearing loss often struggle to hear station announcements and communicate with staff, which can make it harder to plan and carry out journeys.

The new Artificial Intelligence technology being trialled by South Western Railway (SWR) translates live journey information into BSL, which is displayed through a friendly figure on digital totem screens, making it more inclusive.

The project, in partnership with Waterloo Station and Inform Media by LB Foster, will provide accessible travel information to deaf customers who use BSL, displaying information in their first language, giving them more confidence on their journeys.

The cutting-edge technology will be evaluated across a six-month trial period, with a view to rolling it out across the rest of the SWR network. The trial is just one of a number of innovations being considered by

SWR as it strives to improve customer experience and provide better journeys.

Peter Williams, SWR's Customer and Commercial Director said "We are excited to launch the trial of this innovative technology, which has the potential to transform accessibility at Britain's busiest station. We will watch this trial with great interest and if all goes well, we hope we can roll it out across our network."

Huw Merriman, Rail Minister, said "Everyone should be able to travel on our railways with confidence and ease and trials like this are essential in making that a reality."

"Accessibility is a top priority for this Government, and new technologies and projects like this will make a real difference for passengers."

Emma Boswell, who is a member of SWR's Inclusivity and Accessibility Forum and a BSL user, added "This is a breakthrough for the Deaf and Deafblind communities, making travel more accessible and enjoyable with BSL announcements on totems around SWR stations."

Teri Devine, Director for Inclusion at deaf and hearing loss charity RNID, said: "Public transport can present many barriers for deaf people and people with hearing loss, with live information such as platform changes often communicated over a speaker system.

"We are excited by this new initiative at London Waterloo station to make travelling by train more accessible to deaf people who use BSL, and we hope this trial will encourage the public to be more deaf-aware during their journeys."

Photo credit: South Western Railway