

Steamy summer prompts spectator safety warning

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Fans of steam engines are being urged to enjoy them from a safe distance when they travel across Hampshire, Surrey, south west London and Berkshire this summer.

A collection of much-loved steam engines – which includes the iconic Flying Scotsman – and a handful powered by diesel are due to take passengers across the network passing through places such as Winchester, Portsmouth, Chertsey, Hounslow, Reading and Guildford until mid-September.

Network Rail has issued a stark safety warning after dangerous and illegal behaviour on the railway during a Flying Scotsman visit to Hampshire and Berkshire earlier this month.

As the photos taken by the train's onboard camera show, several people were trespassing on the railway to get better views of the passing train at Parlour Gates level crossing in Oakley, Hants and Odd Lane crossing in Stratfield Mortimer, Berkshire.

Trespassing causes significant disruption across the rail network resulting in delays for thousands of passengers and can result in catastrophic injury. Shockingly, given the danger to life, the latest figures

show that over the past two months, there have been 179 incidents causing trains to be delayed by almost 97 hours.

Mark Killick, Network Rail Wessex route director, said: "It's great that so many people have an interest in the railway and that they want to see historic trains such as the Flying Scotsman, but it's vital for them to stay safe. Those acting irresponsibly not only put their own lives in jeopardy, but the safety of trains, their drivers and passengers too.

"The railway is extremely dangerous if people misuse it. It's full of both obvious and hidden dangers, which carry risks of catastrophic injuries or even death.

"It is never acceptable to go onto the track for any reason. Come and enjoy the spectacle of these iconic trains, but please do so from a safe place."

Inspector Andy Jackson, embedded BTP officer said: "Seeing the Flying Scotsman and other steam trains can be an exciting event for many people and we want everyone to be able to have a great day out.

"Our priority is the safety of everyone viewing and travelling on the train, and our officers will be along the route and at stations to ensure everyone can enjoy the event without putting themselves or others in danger.

"Please remember to use safe vantage points to view and take pictures of the train, stay clear of the line, and do not risk serious injury or death by trespassing on the tracks. It is important to remember that the railway is an extremely hazardous environment and those caught trespassing or obstructing trains can expect to be prosecuted."

Trespass on the railway is a criminal offence with up to a £1000 fine. Train obstruction is punishable by up to two years in prison.

Photo credit: Network Rail