

Train announcement system for people with hearing loss trialled by TfW

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A new onboard digital service providing passengers with hearing loss with personalised journey information announcements has been trialled by [Transport for Wales \(TfW\)](#).

The application, called the Hearing Enhanced Audio Relay (HEAR), tested successfully on [TfW](#) trains on the Rhymney – Penarth route for two months.

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The application enables passengers connected to the onboard Wi-Fi to receive personalised journey announcements to their smart devices in real-time. These notifications can be specifically tailored to passengers' preferences, for example only informing them of announcements relating to their destination, in both audible and readable formats. HEAR was funded by the [Department for Transport](#) through its £9m 'First of a Kind 2021' competition, delivered by Innovate UK (part of UKRI).

Michael Davies, Insight and Innovation Manager at [Transport for Wales](#), said: “We are committed to making our network as accessible as possible. Working with [GoMedia](#) on HEAR has given us the opportunity to test a solution that could provide huge benefits to customers and encourage people to choose rail.”

It is estimated one in six people in the UK adult population is affected by hearing loss and by 2031, 14.5 million people, approximately 20% of the UK population, will suffer from some form of hearing loss. Over 60% of passengers with accessibility needs struggle to make their journeys independently, making it more important than ever for public transport to be more accessible for all passengers.

Roger Matthews, [GoMedia's](#) Managing Director, added: “HEAR offers a more versatile and cost-efficient solution to installing expensive hearing loops on trains. The benefits of the solution also extend beyond improving accessibility for passengers with hearing loss – The app itself is customisable, supports multiple languages, and can give passengers an overview of previously made announcements and delay information updates, making it a useful tool for all passengers, where they are visiting from abroad, or would just like to relax on their journey without having to worry about listening out for announcements.”

[GoMedia](#) – a subsidiary of [Icomera](#) and of [EQUANS](#) – developed the technology with support from charities Hearing Link and Hearing Dogs with the aim of alleviating the difficulties passengers with accessibility needs face, using purpose-designed technology powered by real-time information.

A survey of 58 people with hearing loss conducted by charities Hearing Link and Hearing Dogs found that 96% would love to have a solution like HEAR implemented on public transport as currently, only 7% were somewhat confident that they would be made aware of changes and disruptions during their journey, while only 16% felt they were treated equally compared to people without hearing loss.