

Christmas Travel Window

I have received this update from the Secretary of State for Transport:

Dear John

I am writing to provide you with an update on the Government's preparations for the Christmas period.

The Government recently published guidance to help families and friends see each other over the Christmas period – and to do so as safely as possible. Between 23rd and 27th of December or between 22nd and 28th of December for those travelling to and from Northern Ireland, travel restrictions across the UK and between tiers will be lifted to allow three households to come together. Once at their destination, people should follow the rules in that tier.

We are working with transport operators to help people see their loved ones, safely. We ask everyone to closely consider their journey, plan and book ahead, be patient, and be considerate of fellow passengers – and particularly staff who have worked so hard all year – by following the guidance carefully, including keeping space and wearing a face covering on public transport.

To help people travel safely and minimise disruption as far as possible over the Christmas period, we are deploying a series of measures.

- On our strategic road network of motorways and trunk roads, Highways England have **cleared a total of 778 miles of roadworks**, meaning that 96% of the network will be unaffected. Where essential work must continue, speed limits will be set at 60mph (rather than 50mph) where possible to keep disruption to a minimum.
- Ministers have written to all Local Authorities in England with the request that they lift as many roadworks as possible and **ensure bus services are running reliably** over the period, to ease traffic on local roads.
- Network Rail will ensure that **over 95% of the network will be unaffected by engineering works** over the Christmas period. Where essential works must continue, replacement buses will be available.
- We are also working with train operators, a number of whom have already confirmed they will **run longer trains** and increase service levels. For example, longer trains will run on Anglo-Scotland and Liverpool routes to boost the number of seats at anticipated busy times on the West Coast Main Line. Chiltern Railway will also run additional services on the 27 December, and East Midlands Railway will run a full intercity timetable over the Christmas period.
- The Government is also **waiving change of journey admin fees** for Advance rail tickets sold before the announcement of new Covid tiers on 26th November, ensuring passengers are not left out of pocket for changing

their tickets to comply with the guidance.

To provide further support to passengers, Network Rail and train operators have been asked to ensure extra staff are in place at key stations to provide assistance. British Transport Police will also be deploying extra officers to help keep passengers safe.

All transport operators have been asked to increase the clarity and regularity of communications with passengers, to help them plan their journeys, warn of any disruption and offer support.

Finally, to protect and support the resilience of transport workers on the frontline, we are working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care and transport operators on rapid testing at selected sites, the first of which is going live next week.

Further details on these measures can be found in the annex.

To help provide rigorous scrutiny of these plans, the Government has appointed Sir Peter Hendy – Chair of Network Rail – who will work alongside operators and the Department for Transport. He will ensure there is a collective focus across the transport industry on minimising disruption and supporting passengers.

We are also continuing to work with the Devolved Administrations on our plans to ensure we take an aligned approach as far as possible.

I am confident that the measures set out above will ensure that people can travel as safely and reliably as possible if they choose to, and we are doing everything we can to help people see their loved ones safely this Christmas.

Yours ever,

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT