

# Letter from the Rail Minister to the Rail Delivery Group on maintaining accessibility during the COVID-19 outbreak

Thank you for your regular updates on the rail industry's response to the coronavirus outbreak. I want to share my thanks to everyone working hard to keep our railways running, so all those who need to get to work can do so, including NHS staff on the frontline of tackling the virus.

It is critical that people who need to do so are able to travel to work in a safe and reliable manner during this challenging time for the country. I am writing to ask specifically that the industry continues to ensure the needs of disabled people are met during this time. Rail must, irrespective of the circumstances, always be accessible for all.

Working with operators, we have strengthened our commitment to a more accessible railway in recent months, including [announcing 124 stations to benefit from a share of £20 million](#) for mid-tier improvements, part of our £300 million Access for All programme, and the launch of [It's Everyone's Journey](#), ensuring those with non-visible disabilities have a safe, accessible network.

Since the government issued advice for people to avoid travel unless necessary, I have been concerned to hear from disability campaigners about a few incidents at rail stations where individual passengers were apparently refused assistance. I feel strongly that social distancing measures should not limit access in this way and would request that staff have access to clear guidance to ensure they can support all passengers using our railways. I would like to thank you for your assurances that RDG has updated its guidance for operators, so rail workers can remain safe without building barriers to travel for disabled key workers.

We will be working closely with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to investigate any reports of failure to provide assistance to disabled people during the COVID-19 outbreak. Our position on accessibility remains the same, even in these extraordinary times – delivering an accessible service for every passenger is essential to creating an inclusive railway.

Yours sincerely

Chris Heaton-Harris MP

Minister of State for Transport

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## 3D printers band together to help the front line

A band of our Warrington engineering have joined the growing national army of 3D printers who are working to produce personal protective equipment for front line health care workers.

Using their home machines and aeromodelling hobby skills, they're producing face visors and have already started to distribute them across Warrington.

One of the 3D printed visors

Items have been sent to the Birchwood Medical Centre, the Lancashire and South Cumbria NHS Foundation Trust, Wigand Leigh Hospice, Royal Bolton Paediatric Ward, Unsworth Group Practice, Bedford Care home and local district nurses.

The visors are being used by workers in many different front line occupations, like this carer

Engineer Andy Ellison is part of a bigger community of aeromodellers. He said:

We use these machines for our hobby. We are trying to allow modellers near to the demand to produce visors locally – what this means is that if a request comes in via social media, we can direct it to someone near to them.

It's a small contribution in the grand scheme of things but demand is very, very high and the machines are running round the clock.

They've been helped by a donation from the Canon printing office at Hinton House of hundreds of PVC sheets originally destined to be used as document covers. Canon have also ordered the filament used to create the frame for the visors.

Head of Hinton House, Alex Walsh, added:

Andy Ellison, Andy Burrows and Mike Ward are doing a sterling job 3D printing protective face shields. We have a small team making these now but I'm sure there will be other engineers with 3D

printers at home who might want to join the effort.

If you own a 3D printer and can help the team increase the amount of equipment they can produce, visit [warrington.gov.uk](http://warrington.gov.uk)

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## **Victims engagement during Covid-19**

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (but only if you cannot work from home)
- If you go out, stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people at all times
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Do not meet others, even friends or family.

You can spread the virus even if you don't have symptoms.

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## **Freeports Consultation Extension**

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## **UK airlines to save millions as navigation charges deferred**

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