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Railways set Olympics record

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AS THE main Olympics come to an end, the railway is celebrating what is probably its most sustained effort in the history of the industry.

ATOC has revealed that since the opening ceremony, train companies have provided 12.4 million extra seats, an increase of 18.5 per cent on normal services. It is believed to be the most sustained increase in capacity in the railway's 187-year history.

In all, 74.9 million seats were provided during the Games fortnight.

Performance has also held up, in spite of the complexity of running extra services. ATOC said daily average punctuality and reliability of National Rail had ranged from 91.5 per cent to 94.7 per cent.

The railway worked at full capacity for just over two weeks, with operators running extra services and longer trains, and extending the timetable to cater for late running events. The normal schedule of maintenance of trains and infrastructure was bought forward and completed before the Games opened, to allow a maximum timetable.

ATOC chief executive Michael Roberts hailed passengers and staff who had played their part. He said: "A big thank you goes to all our passengers who planned ahead and helped the railway to run smoothly. We are also indebted to our fantastic staff and colleagues across the rail industry who with good humour have worked flat out to deliver the first truly successful public transport Olympics.

"We now look forward to the Paralympics when the railway will be equally focused on helping passengers get to and from events reliably and safely. Once London 2012 is over, our plan is to use the experience of the Games to learn how we can continue improving services and delivering for passengers."

ATOC has been investigating to see if there are any historic parallels, but found that although the railway had made exceptional efforts for special occasions in the past, such as coronations or wartime evacuation, the special timetables had only applied for three or four days rather than two weeks.

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