

Minister calls for quieter trains

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A RAIL MINISTER has urged train companies to turn down the volume, after accusing them of talking too much. Minister Norman Baker said many announcements on trains were unnecessary.

"These announcements are becoming more and more verbose and add nothing to the journey at all," he said.

"We don't need to be told we are in a quiet carriage, that is why we went there in the first place. I don't know why people are told to read the safety cards, I have never seen a passenger read one.

"Passengers are told they are on a non-smoking train, which seems pointless as all trains in Britain are non-smoking."

He said that announcements made by staff were 'not that bad', and reserved his main criticism for automatic messages.

Mr Baker named Southeastern as one of the worst culprits, after describing a journey he had made on HS1 from Kent to St Pancras as 'wonderful', except for the 'barrage of announcements'.

He also pointed out that excessive announcements can mean that passengers tend to ignore them all, and might miss really important information when it comes along.

He told the BBC: "There are so many announcements which get in the way. People do not want every single moment of their journey filled with someone saying something. The sadness is that the unnecessary announcements dilute the value of the important ones."

Operators moved to defend their use of loudspeakers. A spokesman for ATOC responded: "Passengers want concise and relevant announcements, such as what the next station is so that they get off at the right stop. A significant majority tell Passenger Focus that they're satisfied with the information they get on trains and at stations.

"Train companies know there's always a balance to strike – they need to keep passengers informed without irritating them with too many announcements."

Passenger Focus agreed. Director David Sidebottom said: "On-board announcements are important to many passengers to ensure, for instance, that they are aboard the correct train, have a valid ticket, or know when to prepare to alight. This repetitive information may be annoying to some passengers, but it is nevertheless vital for others."

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Melvyn Windebank, Canvey Island, Essex

The announcement I find totally unneeded is on Southern Trains when they announce " you are travelling in coach 5 of 8 etc.!"

I do like their use of hunting horns to announce trains it's a shame they don't have a station at Tally Ho Corner!

Tim Price, Bestwood Village

I agree with the Minister, but the big problem is the noise made by diesel trains whose day to day environment borders the railway. It's not pleasant trying to work or hold a conversation next door to a station full of chattering Sprinters!
In short, can we have more electrification please to replace these noisy diesels?

Gregory Watson, London

The Minister is right - there are far too many irrelevant messages that are made on trains. ATOC will stand behind this not because they agree its right but because of those daft 'ealth and safety rules. We don't need a running countdown of stations that the train may be visiting. Yes - give an announcement as a station is approached, but just cut it down. We survived 150 years of nominal announcements.

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Mr Baker said a journey from Kent on HS1 had been 'wonderful, except for the barrage of announcements'.



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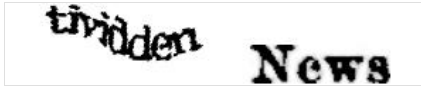
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