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MPs criticise winter transport chaos

By Jane Wild

More must be done to ensure the transport network keeps running during severe weather, MPs have said, as yet more stormy weather is forecast for Britain.

Train companies must do a better job of communicating updates and keeping travellers informed about the length of delays, the MPs said in a transport select committee report into how well prepared trains and airports are for winter weather.

The report praised the intervention made by Network Rail during the storms of the past few months in making early decisions to cancel trains, ensuring that passengers could plan ahead and be less likely to find themselves stranded.

Train companies have increasingly gone online to put messages about delays out to customers, using social media and email alerts. Virgin Trains' Twitter team recently moved to be online 24 hours a day. During delays, rail industry guidelines specify updating staff from a control centre at least every 20 minutes.

The Rail Delivery Group, which represents operators, said: "It is good news that the select committee recognises the significant improvements and investment the rail industry has made, and continues to make, to provide passengers with better information and services when trains are affected by severe weather.

"The rail industry is already carrying out a review of the code of practice on how we communicate with passengers during disruption and will listen carefully to any proposals to improve further the service we offer to travellers."

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