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Dear David

23-27 December 2020

I am writing following the announcement that across Great Britain it will be permitted to meet friends and family between 23rd and 27th December.


We did some initial work on Christmas travel intentions a couple of weeks ago, attached, which showed a range of intentions. We are updating our omnibus work this weekend, having allowed time for the announcement and its implications to sink in. We will share the new findings as soon as we can.

Of course not everyone will in fact travel, and many who do are likely to go by car as they normally would at Christmas. Nevertheless, many people do not have that option and will wish to travel by train. I would therefore encourage you:

- Meet demand and facilitate social distancing as best you can between 23rd and 27th, while recognising that it may not be in passengers' interests for already-planned engineering work to be deferred.
- Double check your website and other channels – and what is showing on National Rail Enquiries about your services – to make sure they are crystal clear about what is running when; the date that tickets go on sale (or confirmation of that fact if they already are); whether you do or don't need to reserve; and what to expect in terms of busyness and the ability to social distance.
- Where there is engineering work, to make sure the number of replacement buses/coaches is sufficient to meet demand while maintaining social distancing. Also, to double check the adequacy of arrangements on the ground to manage the transfer of passengers from train to bus in a Covid-safe way.

This Christmas will clearly not be normal for the railway. Many passengers will understand that you are faced with the challenge of responding to the Christmas bubble arrangements at short notice. But they will expect that the railway does everything it reasonably can to help people who want to see friends and family to do so safely and with confidence.

Yours sincerely

A. J. C. 

Anthony Smith
Chief executive