

PRESS RELEASE

Passengers on the Settle-Carlisle Railway are set to benefit from the adoption of cutting edge technology to enhance their enjoyment of a journey on England's most scenic line. A new free iPhone app is being launched which will drive tourist visits to communities and businesses along the railway, while also providing travellers with a fascinating audio guide giving an insight into the line's history.

The Settle-Carlisle Railway Guide will be launched by Carlisle MP John Stevenson in a ceremony at the Citadel Station, Carlisle on October 31st. "It's important that we do as much as possible to help Cumbrian businesses", he said. "This app reaches millions of people around the world and encourages them to travel on this magnificent railway. It also provides an opportunity for passengers to explore the towns and cities the Settle - Carlisle railway serves. This will encourage more tourists to visit places like Carlisle and see what has to offer."

Inspiration for the app came from Richard Morris, Chairman of Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line. The organisation was pivotal in saving the line from closure in the 1980s, and today works with the Settle-Carlisle Railway Development Company and franchise holders Northern Rail to attract a greater use and understanding of it. "Building this railway in the 19th Century was an astonishing engineering feat akin to the building of the Channel Tunnel", he said. "Thousands of navvies toiled to carve a route through some of England's most inhospitable countryside, and many lost their lives in the process. This app recognises their achievements by drawing attention to some remarkable challenges they overcame, such as the construction of the mile and a half long Blea Moor Tunnel and the iconic Ribbleshead Viaduct."

A central feature of the app is the GPS-driven audio guide. Written by Richard Morris, and narrated by BBC Radio 4 presenter Mark Holdstock, it explains what passengers can see as they travel the route. "We're particularly proud of the way the audio guide has been integrated with the app", said Richard. "Some forty sections of commentary are played at specific waypoints along the line, synchronised with your GPS location. It's uncanny to hear Mark tell you to look out to the left of the train to see a particular feature at exactly the right place. We believe this feature is unique in a railway app, and it complements our on-train guides who travel on many services to give information to tourists."

Leading Cumbrian multimedia company Creative Apps developed the app over a period of several months in close co-operation with the Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line. Managing Director Ian Fisher says that, while the technology involved is complex, the user experience is very simple and satisfying. "What's so appealing about our app is that everyone with an iPhone travelling on the train can have a wealth of information in their pocket which guarantees they get the best out of their trip. It's like having your own personal expert travelling with you. They can instantly find things to do, places to eat, stay and visit, and make contact with businesses that interest them by phone or email - all simply by touching an icon on the screen. And from the point of view of those businesses, the app gives them exposure to a worldwide market of visitors which would, otherwise, be impossible to reach."

The app is now available in Apple's App Stores around the world, and can be run on both the iPhone and iPad. A version designed specifically for the iPad will appear in the next few

weeks. By the end of the year, it's estimated that more than 200 million people will have access to it.

"It's an important step forward for Cumbria tourism", said John Stevenson. "We need to stand out from the crowd more than ever at the moment, and this informative and entertaining use of the latest technology shows that the county is capable of reaching out to new markets around the world."

His view is shared by Friends of the Settle-Carlisle Line Chairman Richard Morris. "This app enhances enjoyment of the historic and scenic Victorian-built railway using its 21st century counterpart, the information super highway. And it will bring much-needed tourism to a part of the country which has a huge amount to offer."

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Note to editors: The Settle-Carlisle Railway Guide can be downloaded free from Apple's App Store, and runs on both the iPhone and iPad.

For further information, or for interview requests, please contact Richard Morris on 07875 534424

Photo opportunity: 8.42am Carlisle Station