

Written evidence submitted by Zipabout

Zipabout's written evidence: 'The future of UK music festivals'

1. About Zipabout

Zipabout is a British technology start-up working to transform the experience of transport.

Through data innovation, Zipabout is providing the government and transport leaders with practical answers to the world's most pressing transport issues: safety, accessibility, sustainability and demand.

During the pandemic, Zipabout was appointed by the Department for Transport to provide our plug-in personalised information service to help rail passengers avoid busier times, maintain social distancing and make informed decisions about their journey.

Our technology is powering National Rail Enquiries' 'Keep Me Updated' by Messenger service and the Government have committed to making this service available to all train operators.

Passengers can currently sign up via the 'Keep Me Updated' button on NRE's Journey Planner results or in Live Departure Boards, or by searching for National Rail Enquiries on Messenger.

The technology can be extended across the entire transport network (metro, e-scooters, cycling and walking) and is currently being used on buses throughout Oxfordshire (via Oxontime / Oxfordshire County Council).

2. Risks to festivals taking place in 2021 and beyond

Zipabout believes that the ability to help customers travel easily and safely to and from music festivals is key to enabling them to go ahead in 2021 and beyond. Reassuring customers they are safe to attend is also vital.

2.1. *Increase in numbers of people travelling by private car / crowding*

Before the pandemic, only 20% of UK festivalgoers used public transport (train and coach) to travel to and from events.¹ If festivals do go ahead in 2021 there is a risk even more passengers will travel by private car, making it harder for festival organisers to predict crowding and stagger customers.

Restoring passenger confidence in public transport will help prevent this, as will creating a transport network that specifically serves the needs of festivals – instead of relying on existing routes and services – and incentivising passengers to use sustainable transport options.

Zipabout have been commissioned by the UK Government to help restore confidence in public transport. The biggest fear users have is of unpredictable crowding. Our patent pending technology platform can forecast demand on the transport network and is being used to power real-time personalised journey updates, including crowding alerts.

¹ [The Show Must Go On Report 18, Powerful-thinking.org.uk \(last accessed on 4 December 2020\)](#)

Zipabout also allows venues and event organisers to stagger customers to manage safer spaces and can help, along with partners such as Zeelo, to create demand responsive transport services for festivals.

Festivals can control the flow of customers arriving if they control the transport system, making the experience safer and less stressful for all customers.

Zipabout work with emergency services and festival security providers as well, enabling more intelligent deployment of their resources and providing instant messaging capabilities without heavy investment.

Case study: Zipabout and The List – helping guide people to events safely

Zipabout are partnering with The List to develop a venue engagement programme which will help venues / event organisers to guide people to events safely, avoid overcrowding, and keep up to date with any government restrictions, transport disruptions and provide alternative routes.

Any venue / event organiser – ranging from arena tours to jumble sales – will be able to register for tools which can help them incorporate a ‘Keep Me Updated’ button on their website for users planning on booking an event at their venue.

The user will be sent to a Zipabout Messenger channel and into a The List branded onboarding sequence, which will include a list of upcoming events at the selected venue and the ability to select and store the journey details for updates and transport advice.

Venues will also be able to onboard customers to the platform using a generic venue QR code on posters, tickets, or social media, as well as have the option to generate a time / date / event specific QR code for single-event use (including events with multiple dates and times). This will onboard users to that specific event and allow them to immediately access journey planning options which will get them to arrive ‘x’ minutes before the event begins. This can be used by venues to help stagger journeys and manage crowding.

Customers booking directly via The List will be able to onboard directly to an event as described above.

The same programme will also be used to create Reasons To Travel, which will support local transport operators and drive footfall to events / venues – helping with the UK’s economic and cultural recovery from the coronavirus crisis.

2.2. Crowding on the wider transport network

It looks increasingly likely social distancing on public transport will have to continue well into 2021 and possibly even beyond.

The List case study outlined above can be used to create flow management for smaller venues as well as big festivals and integrate venue-goers with the wider public transport network. For example, if a large festival is expecting an influx of customers to be travelling by train at a certain time, then other passengers using the network can be warned in real-time of possible disruption / crowding and be advised on how else they can complete their journey. This will also lead to transport operators optimising capacity better.

This will help mitigate the impact festivalgoers travelling via public transport will have on other passengers.

2.3. Covid passports

There is a risk that health officials / government will insist that all festivalgoers will have to show proof of a negative Covid test in the days leading up to the festival on arrival, and / or have a Covid passport to attend.

This feature can be introduced into the transport network – i.e. before boarding a bus festivalgoers will have had to upload their documentation – and help mitigate against customers turning up at festival gates without the required documentation to get in. Reminders to submit this information can be sent along with personalised journey updates / reminders about their travel.

3. Supporting festivals to reduce their environmental impact

Travel typically constitutes around 80% of a festival's total known CO2 emissions, and over three-quarters of festival-goers travel by car or lift share.²

Making it easier and safer for festivalgoers to travel by public transport (rail, bus, dedicated coaches) will help significantly reduce festivals' environmental impact.

3.1. *Creating demand-led transport services / routes for festivals*

Festivals currently rely on existing transport networks to get passengers to and from events. When coaches are laid on, they are booked for an exact time in a specific location before tickets are even put-on sale – i.e. if the customer wants to purchase a coach ticket with their festival ticket they only have a limited option.

Post-pandemic we need to create a demand-led system based on real passenger needs and behaviour for festivals.

When selling coach tickets, they do not need to be fixed to an exact coach. Zipabout – and others – can easily validate the services needed against a customer's home address, assuming this is captured in the booking process, and create demand responsive services. With just 24 hours' notice we can conjure up a bus service and create new routes, we do not need to rely on existing ones.

This would take the onus off of the festival organisers and give security advanced sight of how many people will be arriving and at what time.

3.2. *Engaging sponsor campaigns to incentivise sustainable transport*

Through the service outlined above Zipabout are able to partner with festival sponsors to position their products as a reward or incentive for choosing to travel to the festival via public transport.

For instance, when presented with booking options, a festival sponsors' product could be listed as being free should they choose to travel by public transport – i.e. 'Choose coach over car and get 5 free X on arrival', or 'Choose coach over car and get a free [insert brand] tent on arrival'.

² [The Show Must Go On Report 18, Powerful-thinking.org.uk \(last accessed on 4 December 2020\)](#)

On arrival, another festival sponsor could reward them for travelling by public transport by sending a QR code entitling them to a free coffee or hot meal within the festival.

4. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Festival organisers create demand-led transport services and routes for festivalgoers, which respond to their customers' needs instead of offering set packages at point of festival ticket purchase.

Recommendation 2: Festivals engage their sponsor campaigns to incentivise customers to use sustainable transport and reward them on arrival.

Recommendation 3: Festival organisers use existing technology to communicate with others using the transport network that services will be more busy than usual because of people travelling to / from their event, and help operators plan services to match this surge in demand.

04 December 2020