

Railways for All

The Accessibility Strategy for Great Britain's Railways



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Foreword



We are determined to improve access to the railway. Much of our station infrastructure dates back to the 19th century and making improvements to provide a more inclusive environment for all our citizens will take time. To meet this challenge, the Government has committed an additional £370 million over the next 10 years to deliver a programme of access improvements across the network.

This is set against a backdrop of unprecedented investment by the Government of £87 million each week in the railway. This investment is bringing new rolling stock and improvements to the railway network. With these improvements, more people are using the railway. In 2005 there were more than 1 billion passenger journeys, the highest number for 40 years making Britain's the fastest growing railway in Europe.

However, we recognise that there are challenges on the railway. The rail network can be a difficult environment for disabled people. With around 10 million disabled people, it is important that our society takes steps to remove barriers which restrict access.

This Strategy describes what the rail industry is planning to do to improve access. Significant investment has already been made over the last few years including the introduction of over 4,300 new rail vehicles which meet the requirement of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations.

This Strategy explains the roles that all front-line rail organisations will play in its delivery:

- improving the quality and relevance of information before people travel
- improving access to and within stations
- increasing the number of accessible trains
- improving the quality and consistency of staff training

This is the first accessibility Strategy for our railways. It reflects the need to provide better information, improve the accessibility of our trains and deliver new infrastructure at our stations. We will continue to invest in increasing the ability of all people to travel. Addressing the needs of disabled people is a key part of mainstream railways policy and that future investments in new rail franchises, infrastructure or operations take full account of them.



Derek Twigg
Rail Minister

1 Executive Summary

1.1 Objective

This Strategy explains how the rail industry will improve the accessibility of rail travel in Great Britain. Our objective is to increase the number of journey opportunities for disabled people by improving our stations, trains and related services. By doing this, more disabled people will be able to use the network, more often and for a wider range of journeys, giving disabled people greater access to employment opportunities and to participate in social and leisure activities.

1.2 Background

There is no single measure or estimate of disability, but the most recent figures for the number of disabled people in Britain is around 10 million.

Government policy underlines the importance of mainstreaming the needs and requirements of different social groups. The Government values the importance of social inclusion and providing access to affordable transport services is a key part in improving welfare.

Expanding access to our railways is not a new priority. In the early 1980s British Rail established an advisory group of disabled people to inform them on how to improve access. The Railways Act 1993 made specific provisions in respect of disabled people to ensure that their needs were taken into account by train operators, including having to produce a Disabled People's Protection Policy and work in accordance with a statutory Code of Practice.

Provision was made under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) to ensure that station operators do not discriminate

against disabled people and that all new trains meet improved accessibility standards. As a result over 4,300 rail vehicles currently meet these standards and following the changes introduced in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005) all rail vehicles will have to meet these standards by a date no later than 2020.

1.3 Strategy

This Strategy considers how we plan to improve the accessibility of all aspects of the rail industry including:

- information, ticketing and reservations
- station buildings and platforms
- train carriages
- the quality and consistency of staff training

It considers how the ring-fenced £370 million Access for All funding will be spent to improve stations by targeting investment at making a range of stations step-free whilst providing the flexibility and opportunity to deliver specific improvements to meet local needs.

This Strategy explains how we will use that funding over the next 3 years to 2009. The investment decisions we make today have been based on research conducted within the rail industry and by Government, supported by a wide ranging public consultation held during 2005.

We recognise that over the next 3 years there may be social, political and railway developments which may influence policies and change priorities. We are therefore putting in place a process to ensure that the impact of these events is reflected in future.

The approach we are taking in this Strategy combines an extensive programme of station enhancements, which will deliver a significant improvement in the number of journey opportunities available to disabled people.

2 Towards an Accessible Railway

2.1 Disability in Great Britain

Accessibility is not a marginal issue. There is a strong correlation between age and disability. Two-thirds of disabled people are over the age of 65 and with demographic trends predicting an increase in the proportion of older people in society it is vital that we address these issues now.

Transport is essential for providing access to employment, health services, education and leisure pursuits. Disabled people are particularly dependent on public transport with 60 per cent of disabled people having no car in the household, compared with 27 per cent of the general population. But spontaneous travel is difficult or impossible for many disabled people. Indeed a survey for the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) in 2002 showed that disabled people made only two-thirds as many journeys as non-disabled people.

2.2 Great Britain's Railway

Great Britain's railways are delivered through a partnership between the public and private sectors.

Overall rail industry funding, policy and franchising is the responsibility of the Department for Transport (DfT), except in Scotland where these powers are devolved to the Scottish Executive. There is also a role for the Welsh Assembly Government, the London Mayor and the six Passenger Transport Executives in England over how the railways are run in their areas.

Network Rail owns the infrastructure – the tracks, signalling and stations. The majority of the 2,500 stations on the network are leased

to and managed by Train Operating Companies (TOCs). However, Network Rail manage 17 major stations including the London Termini¹. The TOCs lease their trains and pay Network Rail access charges to run these on their network.

The responsibility for co-ordinating and managing reservations and ticketing is through the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) whose members are the TOCs. ATOC also has a significant role to play in ensuring the transfer of best practice between TOCs, for example in promoting accessibility policy.

The Office of Rail Regulation determines the amount of funding Network Rail receives from TOCs through an access charge review. The last review in 2003 set funding for the period April 2004 to March 2009. This 5 year period provides a sufficient timeframe for Network Rail to plan its work and achieve cost efficiencies.

Responsibility for providing passenger rail services lies with the TOCs, of which most operate under franchises. The DfT competitively tenders for a franchise to run a range of passenger services and stations for a specific amount of time. Recent franchises last for 7 to 10 years depending on performance. The length of current franchises and their expiry dates are phased so that they do not all end at the same time.

The franchise process enables the DfT to specify additional projects they would like the successful TOC to undertake. These can include station enhancements and train refurbishments.

Therefore the access charge review and the start of a new franchise provide the standard industry mechanisms for increasing the amount of investment and the opportunity to target this at improving access.

Given these constraints and the desire to achieve a step change in the accessibility of our railways, the Government has allocated additional investment of £370 million to be spent specifically on improving

¹ Network Rail's Major Stations include: London Cannon Street, Charing Cross, Euston, Fenchurch Street, Kings Cross, Liverpool Street, London Bridge, Paddington, Victoria, Waterloo, Birmingham New Street, Edinburgh Waverley, Gatwick Airport, Glasgow Central, Leeds, Liverpool Lime Street, Manchester Piccadilly.

access to stations. This investment is known as the Access for All funding and is in addition to expenditure determined during the last access charge review or through new franchises. This funding is phased over the next 10 years to 2015.

To establish how the Access for All funding should best be spent, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) consulted in 2005. Under the provisions of the Railways Act 2005 responsibility for taking this forward was transferred to the DfT.

The DfT received a wide range of responses from the rail industry, local government, disability groups and individuals. The results of this have been used to inform the development of this Strategy and a summary is published on the DfT's website (www.dft.gov.uk/access).

2.3 The Disability Discrimination Acts

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the 2005 Act) provide for the railways to be subject to two separate parts of the legislation:

- Part 3 (access to goods, services and facilities). This currently applies to all stations but from the end of 2006 it will also apply in part to the service provided on board the train.
- Part 5 (provision for the Secretary of State for Transport to introduce rail vehicle accessibility regulations). These regulations currently apply to all new trains, but it is proposed that from the end of 2006 they will also apply to refurbishments.

Stations

The DDA requires all station operators to take reasonable steps to ensure that they do not discriminate against disabled people.

Since 1999 they have had a duty to review policies, procedures and practices, and to provide auxiliary aids. Where there are physical barriers to access they have had to take reasonable steps to provide a service which avoids them or provide the service through a reasonable alternative means.

Since October 2004 they have had additionally to consider removing or altering physical barriers in or on approach to a building.

All station operators already provide access to their services. However, what is judged as a reasonable provision today may not be in the future and station operators need to keep their provisions under review.

Trains

Part 5 provided for the Secretary of State to make Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) which came into force on 1 November 1998 and have applied to all new trains entering service since 1st January 1999. These Regulations considerably improve access for disabled passengers and were drawn up in consultation with the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), the Government's statutory advisers on disabled people's transport issues.

The Regulations cover accessibility and accommodation, including the requirements for on-board accessible toilets (where toilets are provided for other passengers), visual and audible information and accessible interior specifications including dedicated wheelchair spaces, appropriate handrails and colour contrasting.

Over 4,300 rail vehicles (train carriages) currently comply with the RVAR. In addition, many older rail vehicles, whilst not meeting full RVAR standards, already have wheelchair accommodation and other features, such as passenger information systems. Following changes introduced in the DDA 2005, it is proposed that from the end of 2006 rail vehicles being refurbished will also be subject to the RVAR.

From the 4th December 2006, TOCs will also be subject to the Part 3 duties for that element of the service which involves the provision and use of the train itself. They will have to address their policies, procedures and practices, tackle gratuitous discrimination and make available auxiliary aids, unless to do so would require physical alterations to the vehicles.

2.4 Disabled People's Protection Policy

All railway licence holders, including the TOCs and Network Rail are required to have a Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP) which describes how they provide a service to disabled passengers at the stations they operate. They are also required to describe the accessible features of each of their stations and this information is available to disabled people through the National Rail Enquiries Service (08457 48 49 50) and online at www.nationalrail.co.uk

2.5 Technical Standards

The Railways Act 1993 and subsequent legislation requires the publication of a Code of Practice on Train and Station Services for Disabled People.

The Code of Practice describes the minimum technical specification for infrastructure, refurbished rolling stock and facilities, and incorporates prevailing best practice in achieving the widest range of access.

All new stations and any refurbishments of stations or rolling stock should meet the specifications in the Code. Provision is made for dispensations to be given where an operator can demonstrate that it would be unreasonable for them to have to comply. An example of that might be where the costs of complying in full would jeopardise a particular project, or where the physical constraints of the site would restrict full compliance. From the end of 2006, it is intended that refurbishments of rolling stock will instead be subject to the RVAR and the exemption provisions which apply under the DDA.

2.6 European Legislation

There are two European Commission proposals which impact on rail travel for disabled people:

- the draft Technical Specification for Interoperability (TSI) – Accessibility for People with Reduced Mobility
- the draft proposal for a Regulation on International Rail Passengers' Rights and Obligations

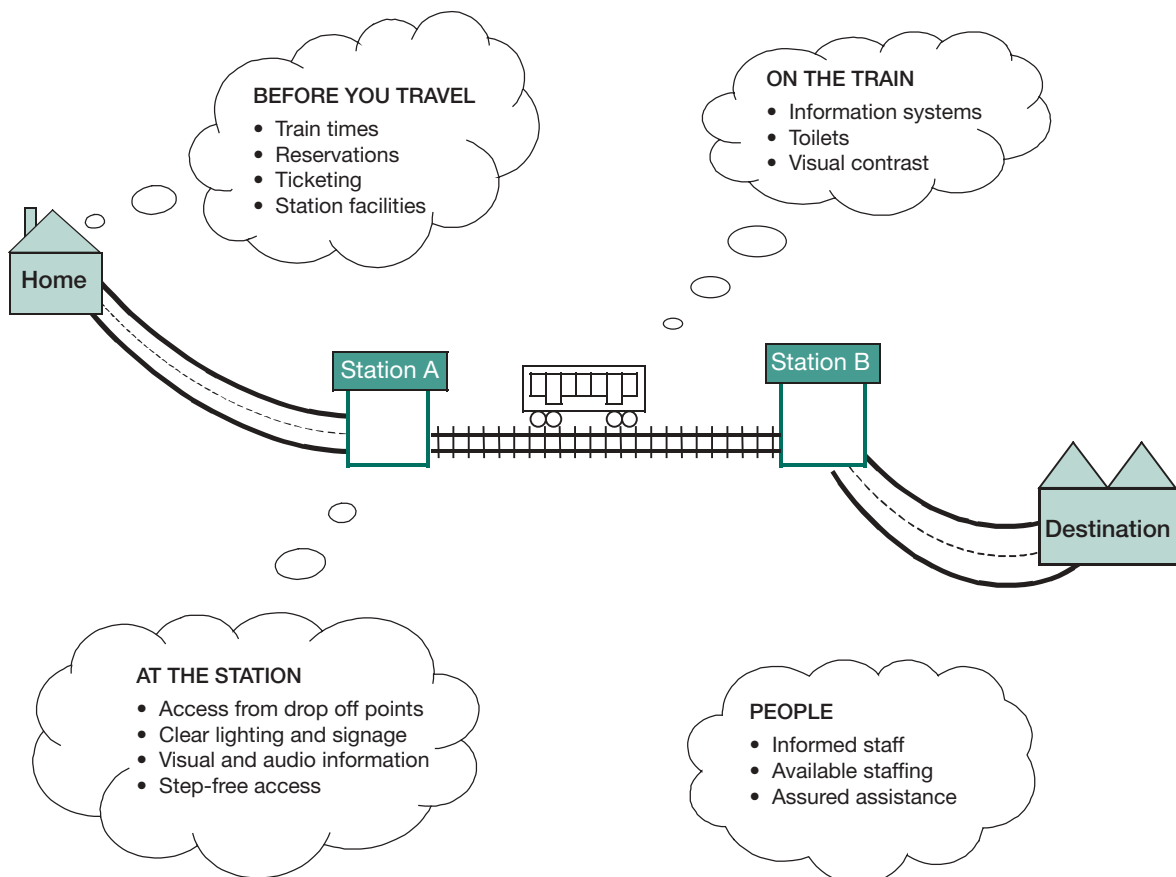
The TSI will set minimum standards for the specification of accessible infrastructure on the Trans European railway Network and for new and upgraded rolling stock. It is currently in draft form and is due to be published in 2007.

The proposed Regulation would establish rights in relation to international rail travel including specific provisions covering disabled people.

2.7 Improving Access to our Railways

A transport chain is often only as strong as its weakest link. We have therefore structured this Strategy to describe how we intend to improve access at all stages of rail travel, including:

- finding information, buying tickets and making reservations (Chapter 4)
- access to station buildings and platforms (Chapter 5)
- the accessibility of train carriages (Chapter 6)
- the quality and consistency of our staff training (Chapter 7)



This Strategy focuses on what we plan to do over the next 3 years to 2009, to ensure that improving access is a mainstream activity of the rail industry.

3 How will this be Delivered?

3.1 Introduction

All parts of the rail industry have a role to play in improving access. This section describes what each organisation does and how they are planning to improve access.

The DfT has also established a cross-industry group specifically to take forward this Strategy and ensure that best practice feeds into the way the industry delivers accessibility improvements.

3.2 Department for Transport

The Department for Transport (DfT) has the following roles which impact directly on improving access. These are:

- overall railway strategy
- specification and procurement of new passenger franchises
- on-going franchise management
- publication and compliance with the Code of Practice
- compliance with the RVAR

Overall Railway Strategy

The Railways Act 2005 requires that before the next access charge review, the Secretary of State and Scottish Ministers must provide the ORR with a High Level Output Statement (HLOS) which describes the railway activities they would like to achieve and the public funding available. The HLOS is a new document and will provide an opportunity to ensure that accessibility is integrated in the future specification of the railway from 2009.

New Franchises

The Government has a duty to ensure best value for money when procuring a TOC franchise which does not automatically mean that the lowest priced bid will win. The DfT currently tender for a franchise in a three stage process:

- Pre-Qualification
- Invitation to Tender (ITT) to those on the shortlist
- Preferred Bidder, for detailed discussions with the proposed franchisee

At the pre-qualification stage a range of questions are asked to establish how a potential bidder has previously addressed improving access for disabled people.

At the ITT stage, the DfT must have produced a detailed franchise specification. This specification may include new projects which improve the accessibility of stations or trains. The short-listed bidders are also invited to submit further proposals for projects they would like to undertake.

These stages enable the DfT to evaluate and specify accessibility improvements.

Franchise Management

Franchises are managed by the DfT. One of the roles is to ensure compliance against commitments made in the franchise including the timely and satisfactory completion of projects.

These projects may have been specified in the original franchise or included as a contract change. Therefore the DfT funds and monitors accessibility improvements and ensures these are installed, maintained and repaired throughout the life of a franchise.

3.3 Transport Scotland

In Scotland the Scottish Executive through the Scottish transport agency, Transport Scotland, is responsible for overall railway strategy, and the specification, procurement and management of the ScotRail franchise.

The Scottish Executive has an allocation of the Access for All funding and will be able to specify where and how this money should be spent on improving access in Scotland. There is only one Scottish franchise, ScotRail which was re-let in 2004.

Recognising that the needs of disabled people are broadly similar across Britain it is proposed that England & Wales and Scotland will progress accessibility improvements in a similar way and to the same standard.

3.4 Welsh Assembly

The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) will specify and fund franchised passenger services within and bordering Wales from 1st April 2006. It also has the option to fund new rail investments in Wales, over and above that currently specified.

3.5 Network Rail

As the owner of nearly all of the 2,500 stations in Great Britain, Network Rail has a key role to play in maintaining and renewing the station fabric. Network Rail is already funded for repair, renewal and maintenance of its assets through the ORR's access charge review. When station improvements are made these should comply with the Code of Practice.

Network Rail will lead on the implementation of the 10 year Access for All programme which over the next 3 years is expected to invest around £100 million to improve station accessibility.

3.6 Train Operating Companies

Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are responsible for the station environment and customer facing assets at the stations which they lease from Network Rail. This includes general decoration, signage and lighting, and customer facing assets including customer information systems, help points, public address systems and closed-circuit television.

The TOCs are generally best placed to capture the demands and concerns of local stakeholders. They are also best placed to understand the relative requirements at stations along their routes. Further, each TOC will have inherited a different asset base, in terms of systems, age and quality.

Different communities require different solutions and it is with this in mind that the DfT is establishing Access for All Small Schemes funding to enable TOCs to submit bids for appropriate and innovative solutions which would benefit the communities they serve (Chapter 5.4).

3.7 Association of Train Operating Companies

The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) operate the following systems on behalf of the rail industry:

- National Rail Enquiries Service (NRES) – 08457 48 49 50
- National Rail website – www.nationalrail.co.uk
- Assisted Passengers' Reservation System (APRS)
- Disabled and Senior Persons Railcards

Significant improvements have been made in all of these over the last few years, and more will be achieved within the timeframe of this Strategy (Chapter 4).

3.8 Office of Rail Regulation

The Office of Rail Regulation (ORR) licences rail organisations to operate in Britain. It grants the track and station access agreements between Network Rail and the TOCs.

As the railways' independent regulator, the ORR determines how much funding Network Rail is allowed, based on the HLOS and funding statements made by the Secretary of State and Scottish Ministers.

The ORR also determines whether the expenditure Network Rail incurs when undertaking projects is efficient, penalising them if they have overspent. With these mechanisms in place, the exposure to cost overruns on the Access for All funding is minimised.

3.9 Local Government

Local Government has a significant role in identifying and evaluating opportunities to improve access and meet their communities' transport needs. This could range from investing in transport interchange schemes to funding improvements at their local stations.

With this in mind, the DfT is also enabling local authorities, Transport for London and Passenger Transport Executives to submit bids for Small Schemes funding specifically to support projects which will improve accessibility at their local stations (Chapter 5.4).

3.10 Other Parties

Across Britain, there are other organisations who directly benefit from a station, for example airport operators, developers or local industry. There may be specific projects where the Access for All Small Schemes funding could be used to improve access and those parties will also be able to submit bids on the same basis as TOCs and local authorities.

3.11 Realising the Benefits

Improving access cannot be achieved overnight. We have inherited a legacy of infrastructure much of which did not make provision for disabled people when it was designed.

The Disability Discrimination Acts have provided a catalyst for improvements, not just through improved infrastructure, but also

through improvements in the policies and practices which underpin the delivery of rail services.

Working together, all the organisations in this chapter contribute to improving access across our railway and the steps being taken under this Strategy will ensure that improving access is part of mainstream railway policy.

4 Improving Information, Ticketing and Assistance

Providing accurate information on journey options, station information, ticketing, reservations and assistance helps passengers to make informed and independent decisions improving their confidence to travel by train.

4.1 Evaluating Journey Options

There are now a variety of ways to find out train times and evaluate journey options.

Stations

Traditional timetables provide information on where trains arrive and depart along specific routes. They can often be downloaded from individual TOC websites. Where a station is staffed, they will often be able to advise on journey options.

In addition, major stations have dedicated travel centres and all staffed stations should be able to help plan and book a journey.

nationalrail.co.uk

The nationalrail.co.uk website is the main access point for all train information and is managed by ATOC. It contains a wealth of railway information from journey planning (which includes current and future engineering works) train running, ticketing and reservations, to detailed station information.

This website also provides a national Map for People with Reduced Mobility indicating the expected level of access at a station.

The website shows current information about the Disabled Persons

Railcard and TOC policy on the carriage of powered scooters and other mobility aids.

08457 48 49 50

This telephone number is for the **National Rail Enquiry Service (NRES)** which is managed by ATOC. This service provides train times and can connect the caller through to a TOC service agent to buy tickets and make reservations. NRES can also connect through to the Disabled Persons Railcard helpline and all TOC assistance booking lines.

0845 60 50 600 (NRES Textphone)

This telephone number enables textphone access to NRES.

TOC Websites

Individual TOC websites contain a range of information including up to date engineering works. Most now enable passengers to book tickets and make reservations. A current list of TOC websites is maintained on nationalrail.co.uk

4.2 Station Accessibility

Understanding the physical characteristics and availability of staff at a station is critical in determining the accessibility of a station. It is also important in evaluating whether to book assistance from the train operators. The rail industry has recently improved the availability and quality of station information and has enabled the TOCs to keep this up to date.

Station information is available from nationalrail.co.uk, by telephone through NRES or by contacting individual TOCs, many of whom produce guides to station and train accessibility.

4.3 Discounted Travel

There are a number of railcards available to provide discounted travel. Information on these railcards can be found at most staffed stations and through nationalrail.co.uk or railcard.co.uk. The following schemes are available across Great Britain:

- For disabled people there is the **Disabled Persons Railcard** (www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk) which enables a disabled person and another person, a one-third discount on most rail-fares. An eligibility form must be completed (available online or from staffed stations) and sent to a processing office.
- For people aged 60 or over, there is the **Senior Persons Railcard** (www.senior-railcard.co.uk) which enables a one-third discount on most rail fares. This is available in person at staffed stations and by telephone to NRES or direct to a TOC.

More information on other discounts available can be found in the 'Rail Travel for Disabled Passengers' guide (see below).

4.4 Buying Tickets

Tickets can be purchased in the following ways before travel:

- In person at a station ticket office, travel centre (or one of 850 licensed travel agents in Britain) or by machine. Many large stations now have low level self service ticket machines, induction loops and other accessibility improvements. Current station information can be found out through nationalrail.co.uk or by contacting NRES.
- Online, in-advance, at **nationalrail.co.uk**, **thetrainline.com** or through some TOC websites.

Tickets should be purchased wherever possible before travel with penalty fares operating in some areas. However, as part of all TOCs Disabled People's Protection Policies, if a disabled person is unable to buy a ticket before travel due to their disability, discounted and leisure priced tickets will be available on the train or at the destination.

4.5 Making a Seat or Wheelchair Space Reservation

Seat reservations are available on most long-distance routes. They tend not to be available on rural or suburban routes. Seat reservations are made at the time a ticket is purchased.

In line with seat reservations, TOCs can make reservations for a wheelchair space. TOCs are obliged to help wherever possible to ensure that wheelchair users are accommodated on all their trains.

4.6 Booking Journey Assistance

ATOC, on behalf of the rail industry, maintains the **Assisted Passengers Reservation Service (APRS)**. Passengers who may need assistance on their train journey are asked to contact NRES or telephone a TOC direct. Some TOCs can also be contacted through their website to arrange assistance.

The objective of APRS is to ensure that staff are available to assist disabled passengers to and from trains at all stations, including intermediate stations, on their journey. Passengers requiring assistance are asked to book at least 24 hours in advance, but if this is not possible train companies will assist wherever possible.

The consultation highlighted the importance of providing an effective assistance service for all disabled people. Improvements to APRS have been made by ATOC over the last few years and will continue to be made. ATOC are committed to exploring how the system can be improved further to support disabled passengers.

4.7 Finding out about Engineering Works

Information on planned engineering works is made available in advance by TOCs at their stations, on nationalrail.co.uk, NRES and APRS. This may affect journeys in several ways from increased journey times due to more station stops, taking a different route or through the provision of replacement transport.

TOCs provide alternative transport (usually buses) to enable completion of a journey. If this transport service is not accessible to you, the TOC will provide alternative accessible transport, if available.

4.8 More Information

Current information on access to the rail network is published by ATOC on the nationrail.co.uk website. This includes a guide 'Rail Travel for Disabled Passengers' which is updated annually and is available in alternative formats.

4.9 Conclusion

The rail industry is committed to providing a comparable level of service to disabled people and non-disabled people wherever possible. Provision of accurate information combined with flexible and accessible means of purchasing tickets, making reservations and finding station information, improves the confidence of disabled people to make journeys by rail.

Within the timeframe of this Strategy, improvements will continue to be made by ATOC in the provision of information on NRES, nationalrail.co.uk and in the APRS system.

5 Improving Station Accessibility

5.1 Background

The rail network in Great Britain has about 2,500 stations. These vary from major city stations with significant retail developments, busy town and interchange stations, to quiet rural stations supporting local communities. Most were built over 100 years ago and potentially each presents different challenges for disabled people.

A key objective of this Strategy is to improve the accessibility of our stations and therefore remove barriers to travelling by rail.

5.2 Access for All Funding

The £370 million Access for All funding is targeted at improving the accessibility of our stations through to 2015. This investment is over and above commitments made in franchises, the ongoing renewal of stations delivered by Network Rail and major station improvement projects.

The DfT has a duty to ensure that this funding is used where it can deliver the most benefit. From April 2006 the Access for All funding is split into two parts:

- £35 million per year is targeted at improving access at the busiest stations to ensure a minimum accessible route within each station which includes providing step-free access. This investment will be delivered by Network Rail and added to its Regulatory Asset Base (RAB).
- £7 million per year, the majority of which will be available as Small Schemes funding. These projects are intended to be sponsored by a range of bodies including TOCs, local authorities and PTEs.

5.3 Delivering an Accessible Route

What is an Accessible Route?

Stations can be difficult places to navigate. Each station's layout is likely to be different. For people who are unfamiliar with the layout, it can be daunting, especially late at night or in poor weather. Minimum levels of lighting, appropriate and visible signage, clearly marked facilities all help improve the accessibility of a station for everyone.

Steps are real barriers to those in wheelchairs and make journeys difficult for many older people and for people with pushchairs and heavy or awkward luggage. Ramps can provide a solution to a short flight of steps, but long, unbroken or steep ramps may often exhaust people and act as a deterrent.

Similarly, long routes between a train and the station exit, whilst perhaps not inhibiting travel, will need to be supported by appropriate seating or resting places for those who have difficulty with long distances.

Within station buildings, a good clear, well lit and signposted route is essential, particularly for people with low vision and those with learning disabilities. But, of course, all passengers will benefit from such measures especially in unfamiliar stations, at night or when the station is crowded.

Some barriers can be overcome by available staffing. Whilst they can help people navigate around the station, appropriate infrastructure or equipment is often essential to make the station accessible.

Some stations have staff operated lifts or crossings, others provide passenger buggies to drive people between the train and exit points.

The consultation responses highlighted the importance of providing a clear, well lit and signposted route which provides access to facilities and platforms for ambulant disabled people and those who use wheelchairs. This concept is known as achieving an 'accessible route' and by developing stations to this standard there will be a much higher degree of certainty as to what to expect at stations in the future.

We are therefore targeting the £35 million per year Access for All funding at achieving an accessible route which will deliver step-free access to stations. This approach will open significantly more of the network to a greater number of people and therefore provide many new journey opportunities.

Prioritisation of Investment

The consultation proposed to invest the Access for All funding at the stations which most people use. We measure this by calculating the number of people who use a station (the footfall) from ticket sales data. This provides us with a figure for each station in Great Britain.

The incidence of disability varies across the country and it was suggested in the consultation responses that account should also be taken of that factor. Consequently, using the 2001 Census data² which identified the proportion of people who considered themselves disabled, we have weighted the footfall figures on a station by station basis. This has meant that those busier stations which are in areas where more people consider themselves disabled, now have a higher priority.

We have not planned to invest in stations which either meet or would be expected to meet our objective of achieving an accessible route over the next 3 years or where staff currently provide an equivalent level of service. This is because we believe that this funding should be used to expand the accessibility of the rail network, rather than investing to improve access at stations which already have reasonable access provision or where access improvements are already planned.

We have also considered how stations form a network and we have not proposed to invest money at neighbouring stations which would potentially serve the same catchment area, preferring to choose stations with a broader geographic spread in order to provide access to a wider number of people.

² The 2001 Census question 13 asked : “Do you have any long-term illness, health problem or disability which limits your daily activities or the work you can do (include problems due to old age)?”

This approach would achieve the best value for money by ensuring the greatest number of people potentially benefit from the investment. However, it would also result in about three-quarters of the first 3 years programme of stations being in London and the South East, which would not meet our objective of improving access across the network.

We have therefore decided that two-thirds of the investment should be based on achieving best value for money, with the remaining funding prioritised to reflect a wider Great Britain network. Taking this approach, the programme for the first 3 years now includes about half of the stations in London and the South East, and half across the rest of Britain.

It is expected that by 2009 all these stations will have an accessible step-free route. We will be reporting progress on the DfT website (www.dft.gov.uk/access) and we will include information on any factors which may defer completion of individual stations.

The choice of where best to invest in the future will be a key role of a new steering group which will be asked to progress this methodology and ensure that the stations which will be prioritised for the remaining Access for All funding best reflect the future demands of disabled rail passengers.

Scotland

Based on the same approach to prioritisation of investment, Transport Scotland has agreed the stations to be targeted for investment within Scotland. Over the next few years, following the development and introduction of Scotland's transport and railway strategies, the priorities within Scotland may change. The processes we have put in place will ensure that these changes can be reflected in the choice of where best to invest in the future.

5.4 Small Schemes Funding

From April 2006, as part of the Access for All funding, the DfT will have up to £7 million per year to invest in projects to improve the accessibility of the rail network.

The objective of this funding is to enable greater flexibility and innovative solutions, particularly addressing the different needs of local communities. In addition, this funding may be targeted at supporting training packages. It will also have to be used to cover any increase in running costs associated with the Access for All funded station enhancements delivered by Network Rail.

For each year the majority of this money will be allocated as Access for All Small Schemes funding. We will be inviting bids for this funding on an annual basis from TOCs, local government and others, for projects which meet our criteria.

The criteria against which project bids will be assessed will include:

- **Relevance** – That the investment will improve the accessibility at stations.
- **Value for Money** – That the proposed DfT grant has similar or better value for money than the one applying to the Network Rail element of the Access for All funding.
- **Whole-life Impacts** – That on-going running costs have been properly considered. The funding will only by exception be available to cover these costs.
- **Credibility** – That the proposed project is at a credible stage and would be expected to be able to be completed within the financial year.

An application pack and detailed instructions on how to apply for funding can be downloaded from the DfT website (www.dft.gov.uk/access) or obtained from the DfT's Mobility & Inclusion Unit (MIU) (Appendix B).

5.5 Design Standards

At the same time as the SRA launched the consultation on the draft Strategy, it also launched a consultation on revisions to the Code of Practice on Train and Station Services for Disabled People. The consultation exercise raised a number of issues. A summary of the responses is published on the DfT's website.

Taken alongside the changes which will be needed following implementation of the TSI, possible implications of the Regulation on International Rail Passengers Rights and Obligations and the extension of the RVAR to refurbished rolling stock, we have decided to carry out a major review of the Code of Practice later in 2006. In the mean time, we propose to issue an addendum to the existing Code of Practice after statutory consultation with DPTAC to review the impact of these changes.

Recognising that the rail industry has a number of standards which apply to elements of station works, we are establishing a cross-industry technical policy group to lead on evaluating applicable technical standards and to ensure that all parts of the industry work towards developing a common set which combines prevailing best practice with applicability at stations.

5.6 Other Policy Areas

Platform to Train Stepping Distances

The gap between the platform and the train is a concern for many disabled people and can undermine the confidence of mobility or visually impaired passengers to use the railway. On new trains, the RVAR require a boarding device to be available (usually a manual ramp) and operated by a trained member of staff.

Platform Design

Platform heights have remained unchanged for many years. The Code of Practice on Train and Station Services for Disabled People requires work to achieve a standard 915mm above rail height when major

platform alterations take place. This can be achieved by changing the platform height or altering the rail height.

Changes to platforms are complicated by the need to alter associated infrastructure, such as waiting rooms. Changes to the rail height may require modifications to significant lengths of track and signalling equipment. Both of these tend to be relatively expensive solutions.

Many platforms are curved and may be passed by high speed or freight trains requiring significant clearance tolerances. At these platforms, achieving level access between the platform and the train may still leave a significant horizontal gap which would still need to be bridged with a boarding device.

Future Policy

The DfT commissioned research to establish the stepping distance and ramp angle that are acceptable to most disabled passengers and to stimulate debate by presenting possible solutions. The research, 'Significant Steps', concluded that the sum of the horizontal gap and the vertical step should ideally be no greater than 200mm, with anything over 300mm being unusable for many older or disabled passengers. Trials also showed that ramps over 8 degrees concerned wheelchair users, as well as presenting possible health and safety issues for anyone providing assistance. The reports can be found on the DfT's website (www.dft.gov.uk/access) or by contacting the DfT's MIU (Appendix B).

The DfT will continue to contribute to work by the industry to inform and make progress on reducing the impact of the stepping distance between the train and platform.

5.7 Tactile Paving

The Code of Practice on Train and Station Services for Disabled People, requires the installation of tactile paving as a platform edge warning for all new platforms and any major works. The surface recommended was developed through research commissioned by the DfT in the 1990s and comprises a series of flat-topped blisters. The surface warns disabled people that they are approaching the

edge of the platform so giving them sufficient warning to step back from the edge.

Although the cost of tactile units is relatively small, installation costs can be significant because of the physical construction of the platforms and because most platforms are in use for most of the day, requiring constrained construction working and the need to maintain access to associated infrastructure (eg entrances, ticket offices, waiting rooms).

However, given the benefits to visually impaired passengers, installation of tactile paving will be considered as part of delivering an accessible route under the Access for All funding. It will be assessed on a station by station basis, taking into account other factors, such as the availability of staff at those stations and total cost.

5.8 Stair Lifts

Passenger stair-lifts provide an alternative means for people with reduced mobility to manage stairs. They are all staff operated and can only be used when they do not pose a safety risk.

While such solutions may be appropriate in buildings such as libraries or local government offices, stair-lifts are not generally suitable for a station environment where the passenger flows are likely to be significant.

Dispensations may be granted exceptionally where an operator can demonstrate that it would be appropriate in the particular circumstances to provide a stair-lift. Some of the factors that would be considered are the flows of passengers and availability of appropriately trained staff to operate the lift.

5.9 Mobility Vehicles/Scooters

TOCs are not required to carry scooters and until recently the majority of TOCs would not do so because of concerns about size, manoeuvrability and stability.

However, scooter design is continuing to develop with smaller, lighter and more manoeuvrable scooters now available. Reflecting these

developments, every TOC will now accept lightweight scooters provided that they can be folded and carried on board as luggage. Some TOCs will carry certain other scooters but the final decision on whether to do so rests with individual TOCs, as they are best placed to take into account the type of rolling stock they use and local conditions.

Specific information on the limitations each train operator places on the carriage of scooters can be found on the nationalrail.co.uk website under the Disabled Passengers section or by contacting NRES.

The DfT commissioned research in 2005 to evaluate the issues around the carriage of scooters on public transport services in general. The research is due to report in 2006 and will help inform future policies.

5.10 Conclusion

During the next 3 years, around £100 million will be spent at the busiest stations in Great Britain as the first part of the Access for All programme. This will deliver a significant improvement in the accessibility of our rail network over a relatively short timeframe.

The Small Schemes funding will be targeted at innovative and local solutions to address the needs of specific communities. In 3 years we intend to have invested up to £20 million in such projects.

The rail industry is committed to making these improvements and work is already underway on these programmes.

6 Improving Trains

6.1 Overview

Britain has around 12,000 rail vehicles (train carriages). Over a third have been delivered in the last 6 years and therefore comply with the requirements of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR).

These Regulations, which apply to all new rail vehicles introduced since 1 January 1999, ensure minimum standards of accessibility, including:

- boarding devices to enable wheelchair users to board and alight more easily.
- larger and more easily accessed priority seats for disabled passengers and a minimum number of designated spaces for wheelchair users depending on the number of carriages.
- the provision of wheelchair accessible toilets where other toilets are provided.
- the provision of improved travel information which can be seen as well as heard.
- appropriate tonal contrasting of features such as handrails and doors.

6.2 The Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The DDA 2005 allows the RVAR to be extended to include older trains when they are refurbished. We propose that the Regulations will apply only to those parts of the vehicle which are subject to the refurbishment plans.

The DDA 2005 requires the setting of an end date, which must be no later than 1 January 2020, by which time all trains must comply with the RVAR. A limited exemption regime exists, which has mainly been used in the past for trains that were already in the design or construction phase when the RVAR was first introduced. In the future, exemptions will most likely be for innovative features that do not comply with the RVAR but which may improve access for disabled travellers and need to be tested in service. We also expect to exempt all existing vehicles on heritage and tourist railways which would otherwise not be able to operate after the end date.

The Act also makes changes to the exemption process providing for greater Parliamentary scrutiny of such exemptions, and requires the DfT to produce an annual report detailing those exemptions that were granted in the previous year.

The DDA 2005 also contains additional measures to strengthen the regulatory regime covering the accessibility of rail vehicles.

It provides for the establishment of a certification regime which would provide a formal “sign-off” for compliant vehicles. It also includes provisions for a new enforcement regime which will allow the Secretary of State for Transport to issue warning notices for non-compliances and ultimately to fine operators who do not respond to those notices.

6.3 Impact of the TSI on the RVAR

The draft TSI for People with Reduced Mobility, is due to come into force in 2007. The DfT is currently assessing the impact of the TSI on the RVAR.

7 People

7.1 Introduction

Staff have a key role in improving the accessibility of the network. From providing information when planning or booking a journey, through to helping on platforms and trains.

Staff are seen by many passengers, and by disabled passengers in particular, as important at times of disruption, especially unplanned engineering works or delayed trains and in improving personal security, all of which increase confidence to travel by rail.

Several key areas have been identified and our policy is to address these over the next 3 years. Our priorities are:

- facilitating improvements in the quality and consistency of staff training.
- evaluating the benefit of providing additional platform staff, especially where those staff currently provide step-free assistance for most, but not all trains throughout the day.
- encouraging TOCs to achieve accreditation under the DfT's Secure Station and Safer Parking Schemes.
- promoting the wider benefits of employing disabled people within the rail industry.

7.2 Training

Having the appropriate infrastructure and rolling stock is only part of the solution. It is also essential that the staff working in those environments are trained to meet the needs of disabled passengers. By ensuring that railway staff have disability awareness training much

can be done to improve the service which is available to disabled people, and the way that service is perceived by the end user.

The DfT recognises the importance of training and is committed to working with the industry to ensure that staff receive the most appropriate training. We will be looking to develop a training strategy for the railway industry in meeting the needs of disabled passengers.

7.3 Platform Staffing

Staff play a key role in providing assistance particularly on the station concourse and platforms. The role of staff at stations varies by size and location. Around 200 of the busiest stations have platform staff available at all times of the day. However, approximately half of all stations, mostly in rural locations, are normally unstaffed.

In some cases where there are, for example staff operated lifts, mobility vehicles or track crossings, staff provide the means of providing access to people with reduced mobility.

We will evaluate the case for additional platform staff, especially at stations where the current availability of staff means that a station only provides step-free access for part of the day.

7.4 Safety and Security

Disabled passengers often feel vulnerable when using public transport and feel reassured by the presence of staff at stations and on trains.

The DfT promotes improved personal security at stations by encouraging accreditation under the Secure Stations Scheme and the Safer Parking Scheme. It also works with other bodies to improve personal security on pedestrian routes to the stations. About 90% of all over ground rail journeys involve passengers starting or finishing their journey at a Secure Station.

The Secure Stations Scheme is a voluntary one and it is up to the TOCs to decide which of their stations to put through the Scheme's accreditation process.

In developing future rail franchises, the DfT will expect TOCs to consider the appropriate level of security at stations and will encourage improvements, including accreditation, where it is shown to be beneficial.

Recently let franchises have included a clearly defined set of requirements to maintain and clean stations and trains. There are requirements to achieve a certain level of cleanliness and repair, and TOCs are checked and audited by independent inspectors. These are all important to how safe people feel when travelling.

7.5 Employment in the Rail Industry

Traditionally the rail industry has employed very few disabled people, in part because of Health and Safety rules.

Employing disabled people helps companies to develop an increased understanding of the needs of disabled people and to find solutions to service challenges.

With the drive for greater workplace equality, rail companies are reviewing where changes to their policies, practices or procedures can enable the employment of a wider range of disabled people.

Appendix A: Glossary

The following table contains a list of the abbreviations used in this document or in connection with improving disabled access in rail.

APRS	Assisted Passengers' Reservations Service enables disabled passengers to book assistance at stations and on trains when they travel on the railway network.
ATOC	The Association of Train Operating Companies is an incorporated association owned by its members, the train operating companies, and representing them. As well as being the official voice of the passenger rail industry, it also provides its members with a range of services that enable them to comply with conditions laid on them in their franchise agreements and licences. These conditions include the National Rail Enquiry Service (NRES) and Railcard marketing.
DDA	The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (as amended by the 2005 Act).
DfT	Department for Transport is the Government department responsible for transport. The responsibilities for railways have been devolved to Scotland and are the responsibility of the Scottish Executive through Transport Scotland.

DPPP

Disabled People's Protection Policy is a public statement of an operator's practices, policies, procedures and management arrangements in relation to the services and facilities provided to their disabled passengers.

DPTAC

The Disabled People's Transport Advisory Committee was established under the Transport Act 1985 as the statutory advisory body to Government on the transport needs of disabled people.

DRC

The Disability Rights Commission is an independent statutory body responsible for advising Government on the effectiveness of disability discrimination legislation and in promoting good practice aimed at bringing about equality of opportunity and increased participation of Britain's 10 million disabled people.

HLOS

High Level Output Statement. This will specify what the DfT and Scottish Executive want to buy for the railways from 2009.

HMRI

Her Majesty's Railway Inspectorate (part of the ORR) is in charge of securing the proper control of risks to the health and safety of employees, passengers and others who might be affected by the operation of Britain's railways.

**Induction
Loops**

Induction loops are equipment to assist deaf and hard of hearing people who use a hearing aid or loop listener to hear sounds more clearly by reducing or cutting out background noise.

MIU	The Department for Transport's Mobility and Inclusion Unit is responsible for the Railways for All Strategy and Access for All funding.
National Rail	www.NationalRail.co.uk Britain's main website for access to all train information.
Network Rail	The company owning and responsible for the operating, maintaining and renewing of the GB rail network.
NRES	National Rail Enquiry Service is a public information provider offering advice on timetables and other rail queries, paid for by train operating companies and accessed by ringing 08457 48 49 50 .
ORR	The Office of Rail Regulation is the railway industry's economic and safety regulator and its principal function is to regulate Network Rail's stewardship of the national rail network. The ORR also licenses operators of railway assets, approves agreements for access by operators to track, stations and light maintenance depots and enforces domestic competition law.
PTEs/PTAs	Passenger Transport Executives are six bodies in England charged with helping to integrate the use of public transport services within their conurbations. They are responsible to Passenger Transport Authorities, made up of representatives of local councils in the areas they serve

RAB	The Regulatory Asset Base is ORR's valuation of Network Rail's assets.
RPC	Since January 2006, the Rail Passengers' Council has been called Passenger Focus which is the statutory rail passenger 'watchdog' bodies.
RVAR	Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations. These are the standards which apply to all new trains
SRA	The Strategic Rail Authority was the government body responsible for GB railways strategy, the specification and management of franchises and railway enhancements from 2001 to 2005.
Textphone	Textphones offer the opportunity for real-time conversation in English. Textphones have a small display screen and a keyboard. They are more suitable for deaf people whose first or preferred language is English.
TfL	Transport for London: the public body responsible for planning and provision of transport within the Capital.
TOCs	Train operating companies which run the passenger services on the network. The representative body for the passenger operating companies is ATOC.
Transport Scotland	Transport Scotland is the new national transport agency for Scotland, responsible for the rail and trunk road networks in Scotland.
Traveline	Provides a nationwide public transport information service through a single telephone number 0870 608 2 608 .
TSI	Technical Specification for Interoperability.
WAG	Welsh Assembly Government.

Appendix B: Contact Details

For more information on this Strategy, please contact:

Railways for All
Mobility and Inclusion Unit
Department for Transport
Great Minister House
76 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DR
Email: miu@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Website

This Strategy along with all the documents mentioned in this Strategy are available on the Department for Transport's website:
www.dft.gov.uk/access

Alternative Formats

This Strategy is also available on request as an audio format and as an easy read version.

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