

Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

please reply to:

Clara Vale
Thibet Road
Sandhurst
Berkshire
GU47 9AR

Wendy.Morton_MP@dft.gov.uk

chair@railfuture.org.uk

For the attention of Wendy Morton, Minister of State

19 April 2022

Dear Minister

Access for All in Control Period 7, 2024-29

Now that the Good Friday 15th April closing date for receipt of a submission by Network Rail of their proposals formulated in association with train operators for the next round of Access for All schemes in the five-year Control Period from April 2024 has passed, we thought it worthwhile setting out some thoughts on the evaluation process.

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers, and freight users, to support economic growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in transport and development planning.

Our regional branches and local members' close collaborative relationships with train operators and with Network Rail's regions lead us to describe some example schemes for your consideration which we believe may illustrate potential benefits which may not otherwise be captured by the application of the conventional bidding criteria.

Purely in alphabetical sequence, where the first figures given are total footfall from the ORR for 2019/20 but added in square brackets are the one-month-earlier pre-pandemic year figure which the ORR have also given, for March 2019 to February 2020.

Uncertainty in data; possible low operating costs # Dorking Deepdene (Mole Valley). Estimated usage 406,538 [421,924] with an indeterminate number of interchanges with nearby Dorking Main station, giving a total number which is uncertain because of the vagaries of the system of allocating journeys based on ticket sales where all three 'Dorking stations' are both a single group for ticket-purchasing purposes as well as identified individually. As well as footfall being likely higher than the official estimates, the station is up on an embankment and appears to present opportunity to at least investigate ramps as an alternative to lifts (which can malfunction and do incur greater ongoing maintenance costs).

Wider usability and sudden peaks # Hampden Park [Sussex] (Eastbourne). Estimated usage 671,586 [686,214]. The ORR estimates added 164,113 within-station interchanges in 2019/20, where passengers are sometimes able to enjoy shorter overall journey times by connecting into an earlier scheduled service from the opposite platform, thereby avoiding the extra time of a reverse journey into and then back out of Eastbourne. These interchanges can be very rushed – an example we looked at involved alighting at 07:16 to catch a service departing at 07:19. The footbridge at Hampden Park is however a particular weakness in passengers' journey experience as it is very narrow, unprotected from the elements, has

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

open stair treads which many find unsettling, and thus badly insufficient capacity to handle safely the volumes of passengers which tend to surge soon after a train has arrived, especially those hurrying to make a connection rather than leave the station, and of course being very old it falls way short of all modern standards. An Access for All improvement is thus likely to benefit more passengers, in proportion, than just those who will get direct benefit from the lift.

Rail is the dominant public transport # Harlington [Beds] (Central Bedfordshire).

Estimated usage: 334,514 [347,256]. The railway is the dominant public transport service to serve the village – on Monday 11th April this year there were 12 buses all day and the first 12 trains of the day were scheduled to call at Harlington station by 02:43 and there were some 160 passenger service calls in all at the railway station. Whilst those requiring level access have some limited public transport provision via bus, the dominant public transport service in the village, which can quickly take people to / from employment and public services is inaccessible.

Revenue protection and wider benefit # St. Leonards Warrior Square (Hastings & Rye).

Estimated usage 823,284 [845,028] plus 178,788 interchanges between the orbital East Coastway line and the radial 1066 (Tonbridge) line. The existing footbridge doubles as a public right of way via the eastbound platform and then directly into the station forecourt outside the ticket office on the south (westbound) side. Meaningful revenue protection is practically impossible in such circumstances.

Availability at all times # Sleaford (Sleaford and North Hykeham). Estimated usage 298,572 [307,952] plus 43,088 interchanges between the Joint Line and Nottingham–Skegness line. The station only has an old footbridge and a light-controlled barrow crossing at the end of long platforms. As we prepare this letter, National Rail Enquiries observes “There are currently no station staff available at Sleaford until further notice. This also affects accessibility to the Nottingham and Lincoln bound platforms as staff will not be available to assist customers across the Barrow crossing”. A lift could be available from start to end of service and not require staff to be present (as remote support facilities are routinely provided).

Initial activity already completed # Reedham (Surrey) – Croydon South. Estimated usage 228,464 [240,760]. First brought to our attention in February 2019 by a local member with a then 9-year-old disabled nephew living nearby but, wheelchair-bound, unable to use the northbound platform for train services towards East Croydon and central London. The station already has a modern footbridge, which on inspection has been verified by the Network Rail Route Enhancements Manager as including design provision for lifts only needing to be added; thus, a particularly cost-effective scheme. The nearby St. Nicolas SEN school and Reedham Children’s Trust for vulnerable and disadvantaged children (the Trust’s name is a sub-title to the station’s platform nameboard) have both previously expressed strong interest and support for a fully step-free station for their pupils, visitors, and staff.

We highlight these particular stations to you as illustrative of some of the more unique characteristics that can make an Access for All programme particularly beneficial to a local community and may well not be properly allowed for in the scoring system that is used to rank candidate stations.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Page

Chair, Railfuture