

Intervention 12 – Infrastructure to provide access for all at rail stations

1 Description of Package

This intervention involves a review of station accessibility across Scotland to identify and remove barriers to travel and improve access for all to Scotland’s rail network. It should be noted that while Rail Accessibility is a matter reserved to the UK government, with the Scottish Government bidding into the Department for Transport’s Access for All programme for funding for accessibility improvements, Transport Scotland can also implement schemes across the country utilising their own funding to improve and enhance step-free access at stations across the country.

Inaccessible infrastructure can exclude people from opportunities afforded by access to the rail network. Persons with reduced mobility who may be affected by inaccessible infrastructure can include disabled people, including those with reduced mobility, wheelchair users and those with sensory impairments; elderly people; parents with prams/young children; and pregnant women. While the initial work should focus on reviewing those stations that have particular accessibility problems, it is recommended that some measures could be accelerated for delivery during STPR2 Phase 1.

Work would also be progressed on identifying and trialling new technological solutions to improve the safety and accessibility of users with reduced mobility at stations, as well as identifying opportunities to improve integrated journeys at stations i.e. by reviewing onward accessibility particularly by bus and taxi.

It is recommended that the study ‘Scotland’s Railway – Parking and Station Connectivity’ being taken forward by ScotRail on behalf of Scotland’s Railway looks to ensure that any investment in provision and management of parking within the railway estate and multi-modal connectivity to and from stations are aligned with prevailing policy outcomes.

2 What we have heard?

The need to improve equality of access for those with reduced mobility such as those listed previously is reflected in promotion of ‘Reducing Inequalities’ as a headline priority of the NTS2.



Improving Access to Rail: Lifts at Stations

Responses to the online survey undertaken for STPR2 revealed that 34% of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with “physical accessibility of trains for those with reduced mobility”.

Research reported in Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework¹ highlighted that approximately one in 10 disabled people in the UK had difficulties getting to a rail, bus or coach station or stop and a similar proportion had difficulties getting on or off these forms of transport. Meanwhile, a study into the impacts of rail accessibility improvements found that 33% of wheelchair users, 19% of hearing impaired passengers and 15% of mobility impaired passengers reported increased trip making following improvements².

3 The evidence base to support a case for change

Station accessibility analysis undertaken by Transport Scotland in 2020, in line with the ORR Station accessibility classification system³, found that of the 360 stations in Scotland, 133 (37%) had step-free access to all platforms; 184 (51%) had a degree of step-free access; and 43 (12%) did not have step-free access to any platform.

While ScotRail provide ‘reasonable’ alternative transport provision at no extra cost to and from the nearest accessible station for users with reduced mobility that require this, the provision of more accessible infrastructure at rail stations across the country would reduce this requirement and contribute to a more inclusive, equitable transport system.

Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework notes that ScotRail’s passenger assistance requests in Scotland were up by 16.7% in 2017-2018⁴. However, data from the Scottish Household Survey (using Limiting long term condition (LLTC) as a proxy for disability) reveals that adults with a LLTC are less likely to travel than those without a LLTC (64% compared to 76% made a trip on the previous day), which could reflect the range of barriers experienced by those with a LLTC. Scottish Household Survey data also suggested that people with a LLTC may be less likely to have access to a private car; 52% of respondents with a LLTC held a

¹ Going Further: Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework 2016, available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/going-further-scotland-s-accessible-travel-framework/>

² Access for all benefit research: impacts of station accessibility improvements. Available at: www.steerdaviesgleave.com/sites/default/files/elfinder/Reporst/Access4AllBenefitResearch2015.pdf

³ ORR, Accessible Travel Policy Guidance for Train and Station Operators, September 2020, Appendix B: Station accessibility classification system, https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-09/accessible-travel-policy-guidance-for-train-and-station-operators_2.pdf

⁴ Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework Delivery Plan for 2019-2020, available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/45098/transport-scotland-communications-corporate-publications-accessible-travel-annual-external-delivery-plan-2019-2020-120720191634.pdf>

driver's licence compared to 73% who did not have an LLTC⁵.

Research undertaken by disability charity Leonard Cheshire has highlighted the impacts that inaccessible transport can have on people with disabilities. Notably, 22% of disabled people reported feelings of isolation because they are unable to participate fully in society due to poor access to transport, while 21% said inaccessible transport had a negative impact on their mental health⁶. The importance of accessible transport to enable people with disabilities to access employment was also highlighted in the research. It is noted that public transport which fails to accommodate a disabled person's needs will have an impact on the individual (for example delays arriving at their workplace). The anxiety experienced can act as an overall deterrent for people using the railway.

A recent evaluation⁷ into the impacts of the Access for All programme, focused on six stations that have delivered accessibility improvements for people with disabilities by providing step-free access along with complementary measures such as improved wayfinding information has also highlighted the benefits of such works. As part of the research, station user surveys with circa. 1850 rail users - including 220 mobility impaired users, 14 wheelchair users, 96 with hearing impairments and 137 with visual impairments - indicated:

- A higher proportion of people with mobility impairments and wheelchair users had a greater awareness of the station improvements delivered; 57% compared to 41% across all users.
- 11% of all station users reported that they had increased the number of trips they made from that station following delivery of the accessibility improvements, with 6% having increased the number of trips significantly. This figure was higher amongst some disabled groups, with a third of wheelchair users, 19% of hearing impaired passengers, and 15% mobility impaired passengers having increased their use of the station.
- The impact of improved facility provision for disabled people on station choice was notable amongst some disability groups, particularly wheelchair users, with the majority saying that they would either always or occasionally travel further to a station which is easier for disabled people to use. Just under a third of mobility impaired and hearing impaired passengers felt the same.

⁵ Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework Delivery Plan for 2019-2020. Available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/45098/transport-scotland-communications-corporate-publications-accessible-travel-annual-external-delivery-plan-2019-2020-120720191634.pdf>

⁶ Leonard Cheshire, Get On Board 2020: Making the Economic Case for Levelling Up Accessible Transport, Available at <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Get-on-Board-2020-policy-report.pdf>

⁷ The Benefits of Improving Access to the UK Rail Network via the Access for All Programme. Available at <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/benefits-improving-access-uk-rail-network.pdf>

An economic appraisal of the six stations that benefitted from accessibility improvements, based on calculation of user and non-user benefits, showed that each station would be expected to deliver positive benefit cost ratios (varying between 2.4 to 11.3) with the key benefits being for existing users. The research therefore concluded that overall the Access for All programme was found to benefit users and society more generally, and has a positive business case. In other words, the benefits of improving the accessibility of rail stations by creating step-free access outweigh the costs, even using a fairly narrow business case assessment methodology. However, the research also identified a range of wider benefits that are more difficult to capture or monetise in conventional transport economic appraisal. This included:

- Benefits to ‘unencumbered’ users; accessibility improvements also benefit unencumbered users due to general renewal of station facilities and improved quality of signage, information, lighting, and removal of clutter etc.
- The value of improvements of this nature (i.e. inclusiveness) that the general population (i.e. those who do not use the scheme) place on such interventions, based on their principles and ethics about the role of Government (and by extension Government expenditure) in supporting the development of a more inclusive society; and
- Option values for potential users of the scheme i.e. the value that potential users would derive from the possible future benefits associated with:
 - Anticipation of future need – e.g. people who will have children/get old.
 - Ability to travel if temporarily incapacitated e.g. injured; and
 - The ageing of the population means that in the future more people will likely come into the various disabled categories

Indeed, on the latter point, as set out in the NTS2, Scotland’s population is ageing. In 2018, 455,000 people in Scotland were aged 75 or over and by 2043 this figure is projected to grow to 776,000, an increase of just over 70%⁸. Delivery of accessibility improvements would therefore provide a benefit now which will continue to increase in the future.

4 The Strategic Rationale

This intervention responds to the impetus provided by the NTS2, which has reducing inequalities through delivering an inclusive transport system that “will provide fair access to services we need” and “will be easy to use for all” as one of the four priorities. The NTS2 recognises that people have different needs and capabilities and it is important that transport operators and bodies ensure that everyone can use the transport system with as few barriers as possible, as targeted through this intervention. Measures to improve the accessibility of rail stations can also encourage greater use and mode shift to rail, which will further support Scotland’s net-zero ambitions.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in wider society and in a transport context paved the way for a

⁸ National Records of Scotland, Projected Population of Scotland (2018-based)

number of inclusive access strategies. At a UK level, the DfT's Inclusive Access Strategy identifies the need for more rail journeys to be facilitated through step-free routes and for all passenger trains to be accessible; included in the Plan is the target to, by 2030, provide equal access for disabled people using the transport system (mainly road and rail). Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework is the first ever Travel Framework co-produced with disabled people in Scotland and outlines a range of issues raised by disabled people with Transport Scotland and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA), including the need to improve accessibility at more railway stations.

The delivery of improvements will provide a wide range of health and wellbeing benefits associated with increased opportunities to participate in society through improved access to jobs, healthcare and other services for users with reduced mobility. In addition to providing benefits for passengers with reduced mobility, post-evaluation research into the impacts of Access for All projects in the UK has shown that improving station accessibility can actually benefit everyone, including other passengers and transport operators. Society can benefit in an economic sense whereby improved public transport access encourages switching from less sustainable transport modes, and in a social sense by creating a more inclusive and caring society which everyone can be proud of.

Why now?

- There is a strong national and local policy context for improving access to the rail network to encourage modal shift, increase access to employment and other opportunities, and reduce inequalities.
- Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework: Our Delivery Plan for 2019-2020 highlights passenger assistance as a priority area, with the aim to encourage more people with reduced mobility who require passenger assistance to use trains (and ferries)⁹.
- As set out above, despite the Equality Act being in place for around ten years, a considerable part of Scotland's rail network remains inaccessible for users with reduced mobility.
- Recently, Leonard Cheshire said that Britain's railway network will not be fully accessible until 2070 unless progress increases¹⁰.
- Evidence from an evaluation of the Access for All programme has indicated the benefits of providing step-free access at rail stations across the country, including the potential for such improvements to increase the number of journeys made by rail by groups with reduced mobility.
- There is a need to realign station parking and car park management in line with key policy developments sought in the NTS2, which sets the long-term direction for transport in Scotland, with the declaration of a 'climate emergency' in particular providing clear direction on the focus of future policy.

⁹ Scotland's Accessible Travel Framework: Our Delivery Plan for 2019-2020, Transport Scotland, available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/45098/transport-scotland-communications-corporate-publications-accessible-travel-annual-external-delivery-plan-2019-2020-120720191634.pdf>

¹⁰ Leonard Cheshire, Get On Board 2020: Making the Economic Case for Levelling Up Accessible Transport, Available at <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/sites/default/files/2020-12/Get-on-Board-2020-policy-report.pdf>

- The forthcoming introduction of Low Emission Zones (LEZ) in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and tightening of the Glasgow LEZ as well as the provisions in the Transport Bill for local authorities to potentially introduce a Workplace Parking Levy (WPL) will influence future demand for station parking e.g. the gradual reduction in city centre parking provision could also push demand out to key nodal points in suburban areas.
- There is an opportunity to learn from the outcomes of recent rail investments e.g. the reopening of the Borders Railway, the Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme and the rolling programme of electrification etc. and embed lessons learned.

5 Meeting the STPR2 Transport Planning Objectives

TRANSPORT PLANNING OBJECTIVE	CONTRIBUTION	SCALE OF IMPACT (-3 to +3)
A sustainable strategic transport system that contributes significantly to the Scottish Government’s net zero emissions target.	Improving accessibility to the rail network could have a beneficial impact in terms of reducing reliance on car and taxi travel although overall environmental impacts associated with a modal shift to rail are likely to be small.	✓
An inclusive strategic transport system that improves the affordability and accessibility of public transport.	Provision of step-free access and other improvements at stations will improve the accessibility of Scotland’s railways, and the onward opportunities provided to access services and employment for a wide range of users. This includes people with mobility issues including disabled people, parents with young children/prams, and those with luggage. It also benefits people with hidden disabilities and medical conditions, as well as the ageing population.	✓✓
A cohesive strategic transport system that enhances communities as places, supporting health and wellbeing.	The development of more accessible stations will support health and wellbeing through increasing access to travel opportunities and participation in society for people that currently face barriers to using the rail network. The general renewal of station facilities and improved quality of signage, information, lighting and removal of clutter are also linked to improved urban realm and placemaking.	✓
An integrated strategic transport system that contributes towards sustainable inclusive growth in Scotland.	Improved accessibility for all to the rail network will increase opportunities to connect people to employment and other services.	✓
A reliable and resilient strategic transport system that is safe and secure for users.	A more accessible rail network will enable users with reduced mobility to have greater confidence in the ability to make round trips on the rail network safe in the knowledge they can access stations without assistance due to step-free facilities. The provision of step-free facilities, and higher quality station environs, will also improve feelings of safety and security amongst rail users.	✓✓

6 Addressing the Post COVID-19 Priorities

POST-C19 PRIORITIES	CONTRIBUTION
Employment	Step-free access at more stations across Scotland’s rail network will increase access to opportunities, including employment opportunities, for those users that cannot currently access the rail network due to physical accessibility barriers.
The Environment	Environmental benefits will be provided through a reduction in the number of private cars or trips using ScotRail’s alternative transport service (typically taxis) owing to the provision of better accessibility on Scotland’s railways. A modal shift to rail will therefore help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. Accompanying improvements in the quality of station facilities can enhance placemaking and develop higher quality urban realms.
Education	Step-free access at more stations across Scotland’s rail network will increase access to opportunities, including education, training and employment opportunities for those users that cannot currently access the rail network due to physical accessibility barriers.
Equalities	This intervention will enhance equality of access to the rail network to a wide range of groups, including protected characteristic groups, who may be unable to access the rail network due to the lack of accessible facilities at many of Scotland’s rail stations.

7 SEA, EqIA and Other Impact Assessments¹¹

ASSESSMENT	COMMENTARY
SEA (Strategic Environmental Assessment)	Improvements to station accessibility are likely to encourage modal shift from car to rail to some extent but the precise contribution of this intervention to modal shift is unknown. The improvement will thereby reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve air quality. Specific impacts would require to be assessed at the station level, with the provision of accessible infrastructure e.g. lifts or ramps, required to be assessed in the context of a station environs, mindful that many of Scotland’s stations may be of historical significance. The intervention is likely to complement the SEA and help progress the SEA objectives, but the station design will need to be sympathetic to the setting of cultural heritage resources. The design will also need to consider how to benefit walking, wheeling and cycling at and around stations.
EqIA (Equality Impact Assessment)	Step-free access at stations will improve transport choices to people who are currently excluded, including people with reduced mobility due to physical or sensory impairments. It will also support the mobility in and around station environs of other protected characteristic groups, such as pregnant women.
ICIA (Island and Communities Impact Assessment)	This intervention is aimed at rail stations across Scotland and is therefore not directly relevant to islands (where there are no stations).
CRWIA (Children’s Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment)	Negligible impact on children and young people.
FSDA (Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment)	Negligible impact on people affected by socio-economic disadvantage.

¹¹ All of these impact assessments are currently underway, but no formal assessments have yet been undertaken. Please note SEA and EqIA scoping reports have been produced and consulted upon.

8 Implementability and Interdependencies

IMPLEMENTABILITY CRITERIA	COMMENTARY
Feasibility	High quality, accessible station facilities are feasible across the rail network in Scotland, though more detailed work will be required to identify the most appropriate solutions on a station by station basis. The first stage of work should involve a review of the rail network to identify priority stations from a physical accessibility perspective; this review and associated quick wins are considered feasible within the timescales of Phase 1. This is in addition to the requirement for any significant investment in upgrading stations to be DDA compliant.
Affordability	Overall implementation costs for the implementation of a fully accessible rail network in Scotland will be substantial, however there is significant scope for prioritisation and phasing of work. Rail Accessibility is reserved to the UK government, rather than a devolved matter. The Scottish Government bids into the Access for All programme for funding which is determined by the Department for Transport, however Transport Scotland can also implement schemes utilising their own funding.
Public Acceptability	A recent evaluation of the Access for All programme ¹² has shown high levels of public support for station improvements post-implementation, both amongst users who will benefit the most (i.e. those with reduced mobility) and unencumbered users.

Key Interdependencies

Accessibility to a transport service is only as good as the weakest link. For rail, the benefit of improving access to stations would be severely compromised if passengers cannot then easily get on their train. Accordingly, as part of this intervention, consideration should also be given to a review of international best practice to improve platform to train accessibility that could for example be taken into account in new rolling stock design/adaptations or other appropriate technology solutions.

¹² The Benefits of Improving Access to the UK Rail Network via the Access For All Programme. Available <https://www.itf-oecd.org/sites/default/files/docs/benefits-improving-access-uk-rail-network.pdf>

This intervention responds to the impetus provided by the NTS2, which prioritises efforts to reduce inequalities through delivering an inclusive transport system that “will provide fair access to services we need” and “will be easy to use for all”. In addition, Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework highlights passenger assistance as a priority area, with the aim to encourage more people with reduced mobility, who require passenger assistance to use trains (and ferries). Linked to improving access for all, there is a need to realign station parking and car park management with key policy developments sought in the NTS2, which sets the long-term direction for transport in Scotland, with the declaration of a ‘climate emergency’ in particular providing clear direction on the focus of future policy.

