

Access for all consultation

This form is for nominations for stations across the GWR network to be made fully accessible during the period 2019-2014. The deadline for nominations is 1st October 2018. GWR and Network Rail will review all of the nominations and submit prioritised stations to the Department for Transport (DfT) for consideration for Access for All funding. The DfT has particularly asked for evidence of how the nominated stations meet the specific criteria captured through the questions below, so please use the file upload section to provide supporting information.

Which Station do you wish to nominate?*

[Stroud Station, Gloucestershire](#)

Are there any local circumstances that mean making accessibility improvements here would benefit more disabled customers?*

If Yes please give details

e.g. A particular local circumstance such as the proximity of hospitals, a school for disabled children or a military rehabilitation centre for example, or stations with relatively high numbers of interchange passengers.

[a. Background](#)

Accessibility improvements at Stroud would benefit a great many disabled customers, not only because of Stroud's passenger numbers, but also because its existing facilities are so poor.

Stroud has a category C2 station with a large rural catchment area beyond the town itself. It is a listed station surrounded by historic buildings and is close to the town centre. Its proximity means that railway lines bisect the town and therefore restrict pedestrian and vehicle movements to key destinations.

Stroud Station has in excess of half a million visitors each year, and has experienced consistent growth over the last few years. The town is the primary market town in Stroud District, which covers 460km². It is the primary station in the District for visitors to and from London, and the preferred choice of many from the surrounding area because of the availability of car parking nearby within the town centre.

Stroud District Council's target for new build homes in the district is 12,800 properties in the next 20 years. This will substantially increase the number of potential rail-users in Stroud's catchment and emphasises the need to invest now in facilities which already fail to meet the demands and expectations of existing customers.

[b. The problem](#)

Research, including two disability audits, has shown that both the station and the support arrangements for disabled people are inadequate. The latest report (and other supporting evidence) can be found at:

<https://shapingtheheartstroud.org/stroud-station-access-for-all/>

Currently, access between Platforms 1 and 2 is via a bridge, and those with mobility issues who cannot manage the steps are necessitated to make a 10 to 15 minute journey on narrow pavements, with no dropped kerbs, along an inaccurately-signed route, on gradients unsuitable for wheelchair users. They have to cross busy roads which are not shown on the diagram of the route, and cross unregulated forecourts where the visibility for and of wheelchair-users is restricted.

Those with impaired sight can struggle with the quality of surfaces involved and with the signage, or feel intimidated having to cross spaces with few visual or tactile clues to explain priorities. Those with impaired hearing may find safe navigation difficult as they may be unable to see or hear car movements. Complicated alternative routes avoiding stepped access may be difficult to negotiate due to the lack of signs, and difficult to recall for anyone with a learning difficulty.

In 2016 Gloucestershire County Council suggested, from an analysis of GP profiles, that there are significant numbers of people locally needing to cope with multiple challenges, resulting in a complex range of needs. The currently poorly-maintained surfaces and chaos not only present accessibility issues for protected characteristic groups, but pose tangible safety risks for all users.

To illustrate the challenges involved, Stroud Town Council has funded an independent film-maker to show what access arrangements at Stroud Station currently look like:

<https://youtu.be/f9LiZJ57L8g>

Decision-makers unfamiliar with the local area can clearly see the need to improve arrangements for all station users.

This isn't a problem that can be resolved by referring rail-users to other stations. The opposite is already happening. Stroud's nearest neighbouring station (and the only other station in the District on the London–Paddington line) is Stonehouse. Disabled passengers are advised not to try to travel from Stonehouse due to its lack of staff support or ramps, which is particularly pertinent for inter-city journeys and high-speed rail-links. This means that neither station adequately caters for disabled users on an important part of the rail network.

c. Our aim

The priority of the Town Council is to create a fully DDA-compliant, accessible station, through a range of measures. Step-free access via lifts is a priority, however improved information and a redesign of facilities to ensure Stroud creates a warm welcome to all station users also needs to be considered.

d. Specific groups who would benefit from a fully-inclusive station

Many people with physical or sensory impairments may find Stroud Station a challenge. They struggle with the facilities on a daily basis and do not have an acceptable alternative.

Gloucestershire-wide statistics suggest there are 9000 people in the county with a serious disability, and an estimated 30,000 with a moderate disability. Colleagues at Gloucestershire County Council have

agreed to try to interrogate the data to find more specific figures for Stroud, but the following needs noting.

According to DWP figures for 2016 there were 500 people claiming disability benefit in Stroud, higher than comparable data for Cheltenham Borough, Tewkesbury Borough, Cotswold District or the Forest of Dean.

Stroud General Hospital has an extensive catchment area and can receive outpatient referrals from across the entire county.

St Roses School, a long-established specialist centre for children with disabilities and special needs. The school is based in the centre of Stroud only a few hundred metres from the station, which is potentially a key access point for visitors and staff.

Allsorts, a county-wide charity based in Stroud which supports children with disabilities and their families.

Creative Sustainability, a Stroud-based charitable organization focused on inclusivity and creativity, working with disadvantaged groups including young disabled participants. Creative Sustainability is also the organization overseeing the adoption of Stroud Station by the Stroud Station Partnership.

Stroud Valley Arts, based at the Brunel Goods Shed on the Stroud Station site, has put in a bid to Arts Council England to create improved disability access to its site.

Figures from Stroud District Council suggest a higher prevalence of older people than the county average, some of whom may be more reliant on public transport or find stepped access at transport interchanges progressively more difficult.

https://www.stroud.gov.uk/media/1096/stroud_profile.pdf

ONS figures suggest that by 2037 there is likely to be a 63% increase in people aged over 65 years across Gloucestershire, so this may be even more pronounced in Stroud.

McCarthy and Stone have retirement flats located a few hundred metres from the station, and make a feature out of their rail-link to London.

e. The effect on Stroud's canal network and future development plans for the town and district

Millions of pounds of investment in the canal network from Brimscombe to Saul has been made as part of regeneration and redevelopment initiatives led by Stroud District Council. Attention has been paid to make towpaths adjacent to the Stroud Station site suitable for disabled users, with signage and ramped access. The Cotswold Canals Trust has created disability-friendly boat experiences, and has specifically identified the need to connect with Stroud Station in its stakeholder consultation feedback on the emerging Masterplan for the station.

The initiatives are important to housing development along the Stroud Valley: sustainable and active transport initiatives and tourism are key drivers for economic development. Stroud is the first choice for visitors coming to the area by train, a hub for tourists, and for a range of local services including healthcare and education.

Are you aware of any other potential sources of funding?*

If yes please give details

This application is part of a Masterplan aimed at making Stroud Station fit for purpose as regards its current users, but also fit to the needs of more people, and to establish it as a significant multi-modal travel exchange. It is attracting support from a variety of agencies and partners.

Stroud Town Council has invested more than £25k in research and consultation to develop a new Masterplan design for Stroud Station in response to local concerns. A key feature of this plan is to improve access over the railway, in particular for disabled users, to make the station easier and more attractive to use and less of a restriction to general movement around the town centre.

Much of the preparatory work and consultation has been completed, and evidence of the need for improved access collated in documents including:

- Stroud Station Travel Plan
- Stroud Station Movement Analysis
- Stroud Station Forecourt Thoughts
- Protected Characteristics reviews
- Access Report by Christian Drewitt
- Neighbourhood Development Plan –
Available at: <https://shapingtheheartstroud.org/stroud-station-access-for-all/>

The Town Council has secured £13k of funding from GWR CCIF to develop the Masterplan to GRIP Stage 2 and beyond. It has committed £20k and secured approximately £20k of additional match funding for the station from Stroud District Council towards implementation of the first stages of the plan, and is prepared to work with local and national partners to improve accessibility for all station-users.

Stroud Town Council is now bidding for approximately £100k from the GWR CCIF fund 2018/19 to begin the first stage in the implementation of the Masterplan. This work will respond to customer demand as evidenced in previous consultation and will build on the feedback from the two disability audits in order to create a more attractive and user-friendly environment for pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchair-users.

a. Working with more partners

The Masterplan identifies a phased development scheme, to leave open the option to adapt to funding opportunities and the chance to collaborate with partners as they arise. For example, Stroud Town Council is negotiating over a Traffic Regulation Order with Gloucestershire County Council Highways and County Councilors to begin controlling vehicular access to the station and to modify traffic movements,

which may be funded from the Town Council's annual budget. The Town Council will be seeking match funding from the County Council to ensure the transition from highways to station land is seamless and user-friendly.

As noted, Stroud Valley Arts is also seeking planning permission to improve the eastern section of the Railway site. SVA is based in the historic Brunel Goods Shed located in a rundown area of the station site. Poor signage and surfaces make the site difficult for a full range of users, and are not consistent with the conservation area in which the listed building sits. A key element of the SVA bid is to provide access improvements to the events space. Stroud Town Council is working to secure interest from other such partners.

How would improvements at this station help to fill gaps in accessibility on the railway or other public transport?*

As described earlier, Stroud Station is the principal and arguably only choice for disabled passengers in Stroud District. It is therefore imperative that Stroud has facilities which meet the needs of all disabled passengers who may wish to travel from the area to London, Gloucester, Cheltenham and beyond.

The Town Council is principally nominating Stroud Station to secure lift access for passengers between its platforms, there are, however, a number of other access issues to address.

a. Cars

Parking is routinely characterized as chaotic. In a 2016 Town Council survey two-thirds of 207 respondents identified the behaviour and movement of vehicles as an issue on the station forecourt. Respondents highlighted:

- Poorly-surfaced facilities which are dangerous and difficult for people with mobility issues to use.
- Unclear carpark markings to guide drivers, leading to confusion and congestion.
- Long zebra-crossings which do not follow the lines of desire for non-vehicular movements, leaving vulnerable users e.g. partially-sighted or elderly travelers, exposed.
- Poor lines of visibility, particularly for wheelchair-users.
- Lack of refuges for pedestrians to linger in the forecourt and little seating to allow people with mobility issues to pause.
- Lack of tactile surfaces to support the movement of partially-sighted people.
- Poor lighting.
- Inadequate signage and poor communication of (inaccurate) information.
- The forecourt design does not cater for the needs of customers, so it is used in an ad hoc way including parking over crossing points, on double yellow lines and in pinch points.

b. The forecourt and pedestrian issues

The Masterplan builds on a Movement Analysis completed in 2016 which shows several areas of conflict on the forecourt between cars, pedestrians, cyclists and wheelchairs, highlighting accessibility and safety issues for a wide range of users. Key areas of congestion at all times of day are next to the two disabled parking bays, which the Masterplan attempts to address.

A qualitative survey of customers' experiences showed that whilst most people accessed the station on foot:

- 60% wanted to see improved access over the railway site e.g. a lift system.
- 32% of people felt the pedestrian access was inadequate.
- Only 6% of people thought pedestrian access was excellent.
- Only 2% believed that car-parking arrangements or kiss and drop arrangements were excellent.
- Only 20% felt parking or dropping-off arrangements were good.
- Nearly 40% of people were critical of the station for its drop-off arrangements. This is particularly significant because the lack of very short-stay, drop-off facilities means that the disabled parking bays near the entrance are regularly abused. In our 2017 disability audit, our auditor was unable to park in the disabled bays because they were being used by people dropping off.

The layout and function of the forecourt does not meet the needs of current users and was found to be challenging and intimidating for disabled users and perceived as unsafe by most.

Any access improvements need to take account of the conditions of the forecourt and the extensive public consultation to remove the barriers to use for a variety of people who may currently find the station and rail services difficult to access.

Please use this space to provide us with any other information that supports your nomination that isn't covered by the questions above

a. Our proposals are well-researched

Stroud Town Council has been working for almost four years to understand the challenges for the community posed by Stroud Station. More than 3000 people have been consulted, and in the last week alone more than 1000 people have signed a petition to support the installation of lifts:

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/let-s-have-lifts-at-stroud-station>

Strategic partners have been consulted and engaged with. Access at Stroud Station is a priority in the Gloucestershire County Council's Local Transport Plan. Stroud Town Council have received letters of support from both the Planning Office at GCC and the CEO of GFirst, the Local Enterprise Partnership (attached).

Independent transport consultants Harris Ethical and Integrated Transport Planning have undertaken primary research and consultation to identify how the community feel about and use Stroud Station, taking account of the range of Protected Characteristic Groups and their access challenges. Accessibility

improvements need to consider not just disabled users, but all groups from the elderly to young families with prams. Accessibility also implies access to not just the physical facilities, but also a range of support such as access to information or the quality of the environment.

Typical feedback about station improvement from the general public includes:

“Level safe access for disabled. With a lift”

“I had to carry a pushchair up the stairs while holding on to two toddlers, very unsafe!!!”

“Almost got run over by cars going around roundabout”

“Those wretched stairs!”

“I haven't really thought about this before, although I do tend to dodge cars/vans regularly as the pedestrian access is poor”

“By making it easier to cross the bridge with a suitcase”

“The bridge does need to be made disabled/buggy friendly”

b. Our proposals have broad support

2500 people responded to the consultation on Stroud's Neighbourhood Development Plan (in which the station features), and an estimated further 700 members of the community have fed into the research projects and consultations undertaken by the Town Council and partners regarding the station.

Stroud Town Council, working with Integrated Transport Planning, has met with all local stakeholders, including Gloucestershire County Council, Gloucestershire Highways and Stroud District Council.

Every single business and every person living within the vicinity of the station has been invited to assess the proposed Masterplan designs, and members of the wider community have been invited to attend consultation events.

The Town Council has endeavored to engage with both GWR and Network Rail to drive plans forward and to ask how we can improve access and the environment at the station, particularly for disabled people, pedestrians and cyclists.

This proposed project fulfils aims expressed by:

- Equality Act 2010. Department for Work and Pensions, Office for Disability Issues. Vision statement: “The UK has a clear vision – to create a society that works for everyone, where all can participate fully.” Gloucestershire County Council's Equality and Diversity Policy. Gloucestershire Local Transport Plan. Underpinned by the extensive Gloucestershire Rail Study Report which identifies the poor access across the track at Stroud as an area for

development and as non-compliant with the 2010 Equalities Act. Short-term recommendations of the report (to 2019) include improvement of station facilities and access.

- Physical and Sensory Impairment Needs Analysis 2016, prepared by Gloucestershire County Council, One Gloucestershire and the Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, which seeks to address the issues faced by those with physical and sensory impairments by creating the possibility of greater independence and choice.
- Stroud District Council's Corporate Equality and Diversity policy.
- Network Rail, "We aim to deliver a more inclusive, accessible service and facilities – increasing our ability to serve existing and potential customers". GWR vision, "A Greater West for everyone".

The Town Council is grateful to have the opportunity to nominate Stroud Station and to work with GWR and Network Rail to deliver an extensively-researched and well-supported Masterplan.

c. In summary, our proposals are key to broader regeneration initiatives

The government's policy intention when introducing neighbourhood planning was to provide a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure they get the right types of development for their community, while also planning positively to support strategic development needs.

Improved access over the railway is specified as a key project in our Neighbourhood Development Plan. The planning process gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. The Stroud community has prioritised improved access over the railway, so Stroud Town Council has undertaken to develop plans to improve the experience of customers at Stroud Station in a bid to promote higher use of more sustainable transport modes.

The Plan highlights the station area as an important gateway to the town centre for more than half a million people per year. The supporting surveys suggest that rail-users would like to see the station forecourts upgraded and improved for ease of access, and to create a more welcoming environment. On a daily basis it is apparent that people are struggling with the stepped access, creating a poor and unwelcoming entrance to the rest of the town.

A renewed and fully accessible station would be a high-profile statement that Stroud is welcoming to all people, and add significantly to the quality of life and opportunities of a great many people who are currently poorly served by our local public transport network.

Contact details

We will share the consultation results with the DfT including details of your organisation so that we can show the range of support for particular schemes. We will hold your contact details so that we can contact you for more information.

Your name*

Your organisation*

Your email address*

File Attachments

If you have a supporting document please add it here

<https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/let-s-have-lifts-at-stroud-station>

<https://shapingtheheartstroud.org/stroud-station-access-for-all/>

<https://youtu.be/f9LiZJ57L8g>

3 letters of support from CEO