



Ein cyf/Our ref MA-P-KS-5187-19

Assembly Members

29 October 2019

Dear Assembly Member,

I wrote to you on 15 April to update you on Welsh stations awarded investment under the UK Government's national Access for All programme, with a £10 million match funding commitment by Transport for Wales.

I am writing now to inform you that the First Minister and I have endorsed the priority nominations for investment under the next phase of Access for All funding – the mid-tier programme - recommended to me by the railway industry Wales and Borders Local Delivery Group.

This represents an £8 million programme of accessibility improvements across Wales and Borders. I am committing an additional £3.6 million contribution of match funding by Transport for Wales and the requirement is for a matching £3.6 million contribution by the UK Government's mid-tier Access for All programme. A further £0.8 million has been identified as a potential contribution by local authorities and the Cardiff City Region, but this is subject to funding approvals by those parties.

In preparing the nominations, as set out in my letter of 15 April, I had asked Transport for Wales to seek to address the access issues at the eight priority stations not awarded UK Government investment in April, which I am strongly of the view remain a priority for investment in step free access. These are:

Carmarthen
Chepstow
Cogan
Neath
Newtown
Pontyclun
Pontypool and New Inn
Ruabon

The priority nominations would involve lift additions to existing structures at Ruabon, Neath and Pontypool and New Inn, where this solution has been identified as a feasible alternative to new bridges.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The remaining five former priority nominations have been assessed as requiring new footbridges with lifts, which would be beyond the scope set by the UK Government for the mid-tier programme, so are not included in the recommended priority nominations, notwithstanding their continuing priority status in terms of access needs.

The priority nominations also include other stations where lift additions to existing structures would be suitable - at Grangetown, Llantwit Major and Whitchurch, Shropshire.

The nominations also include improvements for Haverfordwest station, being developed by Pembrokeshire County Council and the railway industry, and comprising bus and Trawscymru access improvements and additional station car parking.

The improvement at Neath is being developed by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and the railway industry and would see the transfer of the local authority footbridge adjacent the station to railway ownership with a joint upgrade to meet railway industry standards.

Both these local authority partnership schemes are subject to resolution of land issues and operational agreements.

Finally, the nominations include a regional accessibility improvements programme which will include access upgrades across the network, including, provisionally and subject to further feasibility assessment (including the identification of suitable existing station buildings), Changing Places Toilets potentially at a number of locations of strategic significance and/or which are key tourism destinations. Also included in this programme are intended to be a number of stations across the network where tactile paving will be installed, and other relatively simple access upgrades.

All projects are subject to further feasibility and engineering assessment.

I believe that this is an important programme which will provide significant improved accessibility across Wales and Borders. I will be urging the UK Government to commit the investment being sought so that delivery can commence. I also call on them to do more to invest in station accessibility where we continue to suffer an unacceptable number of inaccessible stations, including particularly our remaining five unfunded priority nominations from the previous round.

In closing, I am conscious that during Plenary on 2 October, in response to a question from Nick Ramsey, I promised to provide an update for Assembly Members on progress with the delivery of the eleven schemes which were approved in April by the UK Government for Access for All investment. I have requested a detailed report from the delivery agents, Network Rail and Transport for Wales, and will write again to Assembly Members when this is received.

Yours sincerely,



Ken Skates AC/AM
Gweinidog yr Economi a Thrafnidiaeth
Minister for Economy and Transport