



Department  
for Transport

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12 MAY 2017

Dear Carolyn

Thank you for your letter of 28 March to Chris Grayling, regarding the views and thoughts of the Oldham Council about the Access for All programme. I am replying as the Minister responsible for rail issues.

The Government recognises the importance of improving accessibility at rail stations, it is the Department's aim is to make services more accessible. There are over twelve million people in the United Kingdom with some form of disability or access requirement and we are determined that they should be able to use the transport system, particularly trains, with confidence and ease.

The Access for All programme, launched in 2006 has delivered accessible routes at more than 150 selected stations and more than 1,200 stations having already received smaller scale access improvements. The further £100m made available in 2014 by the rail industry, was to extend the programme from 2015 until 2019. 278 stations were put forward and these were assessed based on their annual passenger footfall, weighted by the incidence of disability in the area. The Government also took into account the preferences of the industry themselves and other factors such as proximity to local hospitals or the availability of third party funding for projects.

With reference to the report drafted by Sir Peter Hendy in 2015, it was indeed recommended that some work be deferred until after April 2019, the start of the rail Control Period 6. This included the deferral of around £50m of the £195m available for Access for All in the current Control Period. The report was accepted in full and 26 stations will now start construction later than planned, although Network Rail will continue to develop them as far as

possible. Please be assured, none of the deferred stations were in the Greater Manchester area.

Despite these improvements the Government is aware that many people will always require assistance to use the mainline rail network. As part of their licence to operate each train operating company is required to have a Disabled Persons' Protection Policy (DPPP) in place. This sets out the level of services and facilities that disabled passengers can expect, how to get staff assistance and how to get help if things do go wrong. Within this policy the operator must commit to participating in the Passenger Assist<sup>1</sup> system.

Operators recommend that passengers requiring assistance book 24 hours in advance. While assistance can be provided in most cases without an advance booking, if the operator knows the details of the journey ahead of time they can arrange for a member of staff to be available on the train, and at the destination station. Failure to comply could be a breach of their license to operate and leave them open to enforcement action by the Office of Rail and Road. Although train operating companies will always endeavour to provide assistance to passengers who require it, booking in advance may be advisable.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that operators make reasonable adjustments to allow access to their services but this does not necessarily mean making changes to the infrastructure of the station. For example, if passengers cannot access a particular station or service, operators are required to make reasonable adjustments to allow the passenger to undertake their journey.

Furthermore, mandatory standards for the accessibility of rail vehicles were first introduced in 1998. Over 10,500 rail vehicles are already in service which were built (or fully refurbished) to those standards, while all older trains have been made more accessible when they undergo partial refurbishment. The law requires all rail vehicles to be fully accessible by no later than 1 January 2020."

Regarding your concerns about stations across Greater Manchester, the train operator company in the recent Northern franchise award, has committed to spend £45m across the stations estate, some of which will be spent on accessibility improvements such as induction loops, tactile paving and better signage.

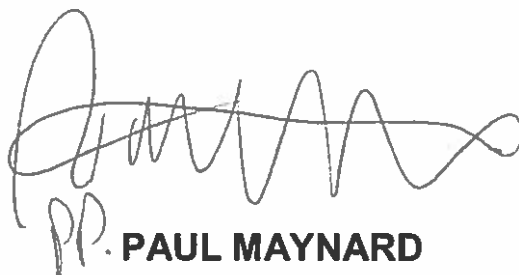
Northern's plans for the future of rail travel in the North build on what passengers have asked for, and will include investments in brand new trains, the "as-new" refurbishment of all other trains, and 2,000 extra services each week.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations\\_destinations/disabled\\_passengers.aspx](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/stations_destinations/disabled_passengers.aspx)

In delivering these plans Northern has made it very clear, that no changes will happen without extensive consultation with employees and the public. Accessibility will be an important part of these discussions.

Thank you again for your letter and for raising Oldham Council's concerns with me. I hope this gives you and the Council reassurance about Northern's modernisation plans. I would encourage the Council to share its thoughts directly with Northern during the ongoing consultations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Paul Maynard', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

**PP. PAUL MAYNARD**  
**Signed by a Private Secretary to avoid delay**

