



Making rail accessible

Guide to policies
and practices

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www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

Contents

1. First Great Western strategy
2. Management arrangements
3. Monitoring and evaluation
4. Access improvements
5. Working with others
6. Staff training
7. Emergency procedures
8. Communications strategy
9. Car parking

1. FGW strategy

First Great Western recognises the special needs and concerns of older people and those with disabilities, when using public transport. Our aim is to ensure that our trains and stations are as accessible as possible. We are committed to an ongoing programme of improvement to accessibility and will endeavour to ensure that our disabled customers are treated fairly.



Our business strategy will continue to ensure that we anticipate the requirements of the Equality Act and that we are compliant with the objectives of the current version of the Department for Transport's "Accessible Train Station Design for Disabled People: A Code of Practice" (the Code of Practice). We will also be working with the standards applied in the European Technical Specification of Interoperability for Persons of Reduced Mobility (TSI PRM).

We have committed to fund an annual programme of minor works at our stations that will improve accessibility during the

course of the franchise. This programme may include:

- Additional clear directional signage.
- Handrails on stairs.
- Access ramps for step free access to platforms. Improvements in accordance with the Code of Practice to other existing ramps where possible.
- Colour contrasting stair edgings.
- Additional accessible seating and improved waiting shelters.
- Additional induction loops in ticket offices.
- Accessible ticket windows.
- Dropped kerbs adjacent to drop off zones.
- Marking out designated Blue Badge car parking bays.
- Lightweight portable train access ramps on platforms that have step free access.

Our Disabled Peoples Protection Policy consists of the two documents, "Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers" and "Making Rail Accessible: Guide to Policies and Procedures". These will be updated and submitted for approval by the DfT annually. At the same time we will provide the DfT with details of our Disability Awareness training and the number of staff who have received training during that period.

2. Management arrangements

The management arrangements detailed below are designed to ensure that accessibility issues are integrated into the First Great Western business planning process, and to ensure that the company's progress against its accessibility goals is measured, reported and appropriately adjusted over time.

2.1 Executive responsibility:

Disability issues are an integral part of our business activity. First Great Western's Head of Sales and Marketing is responsible for the company's DPPP and for ensuring its annual review.

Our Engineering Director is responsible for ensuring that the DPPP, code of practice, Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) and TSI PRM are applied when our vehicles undergo major refurbishment.

The Head of Sales and Marketing will ensure that the DPPP is integrated into all business plans and at the planning stage of all major projects.

The Head of Sales and Marketing will ensure the requirements of passengers with special needs are represented at First Great Western Board level and that briefings are cascaded throughout the organisation accordingly.

2.2 Communication:

We will ensure that all managers and staff are made aware of their responsibilities to disabled passengers, through training programmes, internal publications, online information and briefings from our Customer Services department.

2.3 Reporting progress:

In order to monitor the company's compliance with accessibility, an annual report will be sent to the DfT on the anniversary of the approval of this DPPP. This will detail the progress we have made and any difficulties we have experienced with achieving our objectives and delivering our commitments.

2.4 Liaison with industry representation:

First Great Western will ensure that the company is represented at an appropriate level on the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) Disability Group and any working parties set up by that group to investigate ways in which accessibility may be improved for rail travellers across the country.

2.5 Management and staff responsibilities:

We will ensure that all of our staff and managers are trained to understand our DPPP and its implications for the provision of services to older and disabled passengers. We will train them in the safe use of equipment provided for disabled

passengers, and in assistance and communication techniques required to meet their needs. This training will be provided through our initial training and induction programmes, regular refresher training courses and briefings. We will be continuously looking for ways to deliver our training programs including the use of E learning packages where appropriate, in order to improve our services and facilities for all passengers.

2.6 Management systems:

In order to help ensure that our services and facilities for disabled customers are provided according to The First Great Western DPPP and the Code of Practice we use the following systems:

Our Stations Matrix as provided in appendix B forming part of our document "Making Rail Accessible: Helping Older and Disabled Passengers." This Matrix along with the information provided on the National Rail Database "Stations Made Easy" is designed to make disabled customers aware of the accessible facilities available at our stations.

We encourage disabled customers to use the Assisted Passenger Reservation System (APRS) in order to book tickets, reserve seats or wheelchair spaces where available and to book assistance on and off trains and around stations. Our Assisted Travel Team will also assist with alternative transport to an accessible station if the nearest station is not accessible to the passenger.

Our customers are encouraged to provide feedback and give suggestions to our Assisted Travel Team, on our services and facilities, via email or a call back from the team. This feedback is collated into a report format allowing us to monitor your concerns and act appropriately.

Regular audits are conducted by our Service Quality Audit team on the facilities provided at all stations and vehicles used throughout our network. Details of these audits are provided to each Head of Department and action taken to rectify any failure recognised.

Feasibility studies and business plans are completed for all projects, schemes and passenger facility improvements allowing us to assess the overall return on investment. This information is also provided to stakeholders where external funding is involved.

3. Monitoring and evaluation

Customers who have booked assistance with us will be asked if they would like to be contacted by telephone shortly after their journey to find out their views on our service.



This allows us to monitor our disabled travel arrangements and, where they have failed, put in place processes to prevent this from happening again. This also allows us, through our internal reporting regime, to monitor key issues and trends which may be highlighted and to make adjustments to our

facilities, equipment and service delivery where necessary. We will attempt to contact every customer that agrees to provide feedback and who provides telephone contact details at the time of booking. We are also looking at new ways of allowing customers to give us feedback on the Internet.

Through the reports provided by our Assisted Travel Team each period we monitor

- The number, description and type of comments received.
- The number and type of assistance booked.
- The number and circumstances of assistance failures.
- The number of delay minutes attributed and applied to Performance targets.
- Information on the failure to provide the service and facilities promised in our DPPP.

We also act on information provided in meetings with our customer panels, disabled passenger groups, other disabled groups and organisations, rail User groups and letters and feedback from passengers, local and national politicians or other public representatives.

4. Access improvements

We are committed to adopting the services and standards set out in the Code of Practice as well as the Technical Specification of Interoperability for Persons with Reduced Mobility (TSI PRM).



We will ensure that any new trains we purchase during the course of the franchise will comply with the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations 1995 (RVAR) and the TSI PRM. When we refurbish our trains we will take account of RVAR or TSI PRM whichever covers train refurbishment at that time, to improve accessibility or, where this proves to be impracticable, seek appropriate dispensation or exemption from the Department for Transport. Dispensation will only be sought after all avenues to comply have been exhausted.

The following improvements to First Great Western stations and trains have been completed since the issue of our last Disabled Peoples' Protection Policy in April 2009:

We are installing 358 new, accessible help points on nearly all platforms on our 210 stations with the exception of Reading and Bristol Temple Meads. These help points will allow our disabled customers to speak to an advisor for journey information or assistance in the event of an emergency. At our stations currently without customer information displays or a public address system, we are installing enhanced help points that will also provide live departure information. At 63 of these stations this real-time train information will be provided visually on a built-in WebCIS display. At 53 other stations it will be provided aurally by pressing a "next train" information button.

We have made every effort within the constraints of the station environment to locate the new help points so that they are accessible, are at an accessible height, can be located easily,

and are positioned conveniently for the majority of customers waiting on platforms.

The new help points feature audio frequency induction loops are provided to assist hearing-impaired customers. The buttons on the new help points used to call advisers or activate the aural "next train" information are differentiated by touch and colour in order to assist our visually impaired customers. The top button for Emergency assistance is green with a smooth finish and is 67mm in diameter. Below this is the button for Information queries, which is blue with a smooth finish and is 46mm in diameter. Finally, at stations where they are provided, the bottom button, which activates the aural "next train" information, is yellow with a raised concentric circle texture and is 46mm in diameter.

The help points also include a call status lamp to indicate to hearing impaired persons when a call is connecting (flashing lamp) or has connected (steady lamp). However, during busy times it is possible that after the call is connected and the lamp is steadily lit, the call may be placed in queue for a short period until an advisor becomes available.

Completed improvements;

- Henley on Thames – Installation of dropped kerbs, accessible parking spaces, traffic calming, step free footpath to public toilets and automatic doors.
- Didcot Parkway - Installation of induction loop, installation of accessible waiting rooms platforms 1 and 4/5.
- Shiplake - Installation of step-free access ramp and stairs with dual height handrails from the car park to the platform.
- Evesham - Installation of step-free access ramp to platform 2.
- Penryn – Installation of access ramp to platform, Blue Badge car park spaces and dropped kerbs.
- Barnstaple – Installation of ticket office and low-level window, Installation of accessible toilets, step-free access to ticket office and relocation of Blue Badge car parking spaces.
- Eggesford - New shelter installed
- Newton St Cyress - New shelter installed
- Starcross - New shelter installed
- Digby and Sowton - New shelter installed
- Pershore - Improvement work to shelters
- Exeter St Thomas - Shelter relocated from Digby and Sowton
- Bradford On Avon - Access ramp installed to the north-bound platform,
- Bourne End - Accessible toilet improvements.
- Midgham - Improved access to south - bound platform.
- Newton Abbot - Accessible toilet improvements.
- Pangbourne - Relocation of accessible parking and installation of automatic door..
- Pewsey - Accessible toilet improvements.
- Romsey - New access ramp to south - bound platform and new accessible parking.
- Theale -Induction loop and access ramp to ticket office.
- Warminster – Improved access ramp to south-bound platform.

On Going Projects

- Keynsham - Access ramp to west - bound platform, design completed and in the tender process. Funding for construction to be agreed. If successful, completion is intended for end October 2011.
- Honebourne – Improvements to waiting shelter
- The following features were added during the recent refurbishment of our 158 series diesel trains –
- Colour contrast and illuminated door open buttons added to the automatic doors to saloons.
- On board ramps were fitted with location pins for safety when used in wet weather.

5. Working with others

Our Mobility and Inclusion Manager represents First Great Western at the Quarterly ATOC Disability Group meetings and is actively involved with many of the associated working groups.



We consult on disability issues with the Department for Transport, Passenger Focus, London TravelWatch and the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC).

We will continue to work and meet with representatives of such organisations as Assistance Dogs UK, RNIB, RNID and other groups who represent all passengers including those with disabilities.

Our Mobility and Inclusion Manager meets on a regular basis with representatives of local authorities and many other groups with links to both transport and disabilities.

6. Staff training

All our customer facing employees are trained to anticipate the needs of disabled customers. All employees undergo a one-day disability awareness-training module as part of their induction into the company and will attend refresher courses at least every 4 years. All front line staff who deal directly with passengers are trained in the safe use and handling of all necessary equipment.

The aim of the Disability Awareness course is to build knowledge and skills to enable employees to best meet the needs of customers who have impairments.

The course objectives are to:

- Establish the concept of disability in its widest sense.
- Introduce new staff to the definition of a disability as described by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).
- Identify the difference between barriers caused by attitude and behaviours, and by design.
- Discuss the aim of the Equality Act and the requirements it places on First Great Western, as a company and you as an individual.
- Familiarise our staff with First Great Western's Scooter Policy.
- Provide our staff with an introduction to the practical and etiquette issues that can arise through assisting wheelchair users.
- Familiarise our staff with the wide range of visual impairments that can have vastly different effects on a person's use of the rail environment.
- Emphasise that first impressions are sometimes misleading and that the majority of impairments are not immediately apparent.
- Familiarise our staff with the different levels of hearing impairments that can have different effects on a person's

use of the rail environment.

- Raise awareness of the impairments affecting a person's ability to process information, and look at ways information can be presented to make it easier for customers who have communication related disabilities to understand
- To instruct staff in the correct use of wheel chair ramps

First Great Western has incorporated the ATOC DVD "everything you always wanted to know about disability but were afraid to ask" at the training day. This DVD is designed to help the customer - facing staff to deliver the high standards that both excellent customer service and the law require.

We offer all our customer facing staff the opportunity to complete an NVQ (National Vocational Qualification – Level 2 in Customer Service. This course contains modules on understanding the differing needs of customers, including those with disabilities. All of our management and customer facing staff have completed our award winning 2 day customised training course 'Putting Customers First.'

We will produce an annual report for the Department for Transport (DfT) detailing the number of staff, including management staff that have attended disability awareness courses during the previous 12 months.

We have signed up to the Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) "Start to sign at Your Workplace" programme and we will encourage those of our staff who show an interest to learn British Sign Language (BSL) to assist communication with deaf customers.

7. Emergency procedures

Our trains display safety information on what to do in the rare event of an on-board emergency. Evacuation guidelines are either displayed in the vestibule areas adjacent to doors, on the carriage walls or alongside the seats on our High Speed Trains.



The guidelines use pictorial graphics so customers with learning difficulties or those who do not understand English will find them clear. Our on-board train staff will make a Braille version of our safety leaflet available to any blind or partially sighted customers upon request. We regret that we cannot provide Braille versions of this document on our driver only services, however if you wish to obtain a copy free of charge, please call us on 0800 197 1329.

Our on-train emergency plan includes provision for dealing with our disabled customers. In the event of an emergency on the train, we consider the safest option is nearly always to stay on board the train until our staff have fully assessed the situation. If it proves necessary for the train to be evacuated, the safest place to do this is at a station. Unless the situation is life threatening, immobile customers should remain on the train until the emergency services arrive. All of our staff receive comprehensive evacuation training and this includes the assistance of disabled passengers.

8. Communications strategy

It is our intention at all times, to provide information about our services to all current and potential customers. We will do this in conjunction with our industry partners via a range of printed literature, through print and broadcast media and through our website. Our Marketing and Communication teams manage the release and publication of information.

We endeavour to keep our customers informed with current information regarding all of our services. We do this through our timetables and leaflets, posters, press releases and multi-media contact, product advertising and the First Great Western, ATOC and National Rail Enquiries websites. We will provide our customers with the opportunity to book assisted travel via our website using our on line-booking form.

Information regarding unforeseen circumstances is a priority and customers are kept informed via our Customer Information Screens and Public Address systems at stations and where possible contacted by telephone or text.

We encourage our customers to provide feedback and we use this information to assist in monitoring and evaluating our services and facilities and to help provide potential options for improvements.

Our 'Making Rail Accessible; Helping Older and Disabled Passengers' document also provides valuable information regarding the use and availability of our services.

8.1 Telephones

We provide information on assisted travel and ticket sales on our help line at 0800 197 1329 each day of the week between 0700 and 2200. We encourage customers with hearing difficulties to use our website or email facilities. Text phone is also available on 18001 0800 197 1329.

8.2 Website

Our website conforms to Level A standard of the W3C's Web Accessibility Initiative's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

It also includes many features found in AA sites such as colour considerations and easily resizable fonts. We will continue to make improvements and make sure this website conforms to these guidelines. We employ an expert on web accessibility within our design team, and regularly liaise with recognised bodies such as AbilityNet and RNIB.

Our new developments are built in accordance to:

- The principles set out in PAS78
- W3C's WAI Guidelines, levels 1, 2 (and some of 3) - tested with Watchfire Bobby and TAW 3;
- Colour contrast testing using 'Snook.ca colour contrast checker' and is in accordance with Level 3 of W3C's WAI*

Our pages aim to conform to Level A compliance as specified by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. This standard is endorsed by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) and the Disability Rights Commission.

8.3 Signage

We will seek to identify inadequacies in the provision of directional signage to our stations, train services and facilities across our network. Where these are identified within areas and locations, which fall within the jurisdiction of local authorities, we will engage with the relevant authority with a view to pursuing improvements.

We will follow the standards and guidance in the Code of Practice, which deal with signage at stations and consider the guidelines provided in the good practice guide published by the RSSB on wayfinding at stations.

9. Car parking

We have a programme to ensure that all our station car parks have a suitable number of designated parking bays for disabled customers and we will introduce additional spaces where demand consistently exceeds supply.

These bays are laid out to meet current dimensional guidelines for wheelchair access. Parking is free for all customers displaying a current international Blue Badge. If there are not enough designated disabled parking bays, disabled customers may park in a non-designated bay free of charge providing their vehicle displays a current international blue badge.

At car parks where the number of disabled parking bays is

less than that specified in the Code of Practice, we will supply the DfT with a report every six months, detailing average weekly usage of disabled bays. We will take measures to deal with the improper use of car parking bays that have been designated for use by disabled customers. These measures will include the issue of Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) and in exceptional cases we will instigate prosecution under Railway Byelaw 14.

Notes

For more information

First Great Western

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or call us on **08457 000 125**

We are open 0700 - 2200 daily

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08457 48 49 50

For train times and fares

Daily, 24 hours, calls may be recorded

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