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Right Honourable Chris Grayling MP
Secretary of State for Transport
Department for Transport
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Dear Minister

10th November, 2017

Accessibility Improvements at Abergavenny Railway Station

I am writing to request that urgent action is taken to improve accessibility for all at Abergavenny railway station.

As set out by Raj Bains of the DfT in a letter of 14 August (ref no 202420), Abergavenny was chosen for the original Access for All programme in 2006. The station was due to have received a new footbridge and two lifts to deliver an accessible route to and between each platform. The project was cancelled in 2012 because, as the letter states, signalling issues, and the funding diverted to other projects in Wales after consultation with the Welsh Government.

Your response has been considered by the Council's Strategic Transport Group, which brings together councillors and key community stakeholders, and by the full council on 9 November.

The problem has existed for many years. It was limited in the days of railway porters, station masters, and two ticket office sales staff. Nowadays with one member of staff selling tickets at limited hours (and often not replaced when on sick leave), it means that the barrow crossing (which is the only alternative access to the footbridge), is not always available. The problem is exacerbated when passengers (especially during evening time) arrive not aware of the procedure of asking the guard for help. This is often realised after the train has left leaving them to struggle over the bridge. Pressure is mounting in the area with groups of disabled people campaigning to claim their deserved rights under the law. I can personally testify that the arrangements for crossing between platforms at Abergavenny station are extremely unsatisfactory, not only for the disabled but for anyone with luggage, young children or less than fully mobile.

I am not aware of any consultation with the local community or with MCC in 2012 when the decision was taken not to proceed with the project. Neither has there been any further information on the conflict between the proposed bridge and signal visibility, whether any temporary measures to overcome the problem pending a wider re-signalling project on the line were considered, or whether the proposed re-signalling is programmed and when it is likely to occur.

Your letter invites the council to nominate Abergavenny next year for an extended Access for All programme, and to seek industry support and third party funding contributions. However, as Abergavenny was already part of an approved programme, we are seeking assurance from you that it will automatically go at the top of any future programme. We will certainly seek further discussions with Network Rail and operators, and have copied correspondence to them. We would in particular request the relevant government and industry partners to examine temporary signalling possibilities as a vital step towards unlocking this most unacceptable situation.

Our Council has received correspondence from Abergavenny Town Council seeking support in lobbying for action to be taken to address the problems for pedestrians accessing the station platforms and the County Council has also supported a motion to the same effect but I will also take this opportunity to raise similar problems being encountered at Chepstow Station. Mr Bains letter advises that the accessibility problems encountered at Chepstow Station do not justify inclusion in any improvement programme but I would suggest that such a basic access issue does not reflect well upon any public transport service.

Yours Sincerely



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Cabinet Member for Operations

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