

£1 million signed off to upgrade Billingham station access

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Tees Valley Mayor Ben Houchen has signed off a £1million investment to significantly improve disability access at Billingham railway station.

Billingham is the only regularly served station in the North East with no access for passengers with mobility problems to any of its platforms. Currently, from the car park and drop off point, access onto platforms 1 and 2 is only available via a stepped footbridge.

The scheme will see the existing pedestrian footbridge, which is approaching the end of its life, replaced by a new one served by lifts, making it step-free and suitable for wheelchair users. On top of this, a series of car park and access route improvements will take place to make the station even better to use for all passengers.

The £3.59million project will be delivered by Network Rail, which is also contributing £1.39million to the plans, with a further £1million funding coming from Department for Transport's Access For All fund and £200,000 from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

Design work for the new access and facilities has been ongoing, ahead of work starting in March 2022 that is due to be complete by November.

Mayor Houchen said: "I'm delighted we can move these plans a step closer to reality to make it easier for local people, especially those with mobility issues that find it difficult or impossible to use stairs.

"The station is a vital lifeline for many people in the surrounding area, connecting them with Middlesbrough, Hartlepool and the wider North East but for too long has been inaccessible to many. This funding will allow us to install new lifts and improve access points to make sure no one is being left behind and make the station a real option for people like wheelchair users.

"This is just the latest in a long list of station improvements right across Teesside, Darlington and Hartlepool that we're helping to drive forward. These include a £22.5million investment in Middlesbrough station to get it ready for London services in just a few short months, to the complete transformation of Darlington station to give everyone here the fast, reliable and accessible transport links they deserve."

Matt Rice, Route Director for Network Rail's North and East route, said: "I'm really pleased this eagerly anticipated and much needed project to improve accessibility at Billingham is now ready to be delivered. We're delighted to be contributing towards the funding of the footbridge alongside our partners in both central and local government and will continue to support the aspirations of Mayor Houchen and other railway stakeholders as we work together to keep improving the railway for existing and future passengers in the Tees Valley."

Councillor Mike Smith, Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Environment and Transport said: "Billingham station is the only railway station in the Tees Valley with no disabled access. For a long time, we've thought this was just unacceptable and that's why in recent years we've been working hard to bring this scheme to fruition and make sure that wheelchair users and those with pushchairs and prams can access the public transport they need for work, leisure and to visit friends and family."

Photo credit: Tees Valley Combined Authority