

£250k Northern scheme deadline extended

December 19, 2022



A £250,000 scheme launched last month designed to improve accessibility for all in train travel has extended its deadline into the New Year.

Northern's Accessibility Innovation Scheme is dedicated to opening opportunities for disabled and older people on the Northern network and Northern is seeking proposals from organisations, stakeholders, community groups and charities on specific projects that will make a positive difference to communities across the north of England.

The scheme is designed to provide companies for funding which will help them in projects that will improve access to stations and services in Northern's network. Groups are able to bid up to £100,000 in funding. Applications will now be taken up until Tuesday, 3 January 2023.

The £250k programme will be awarded across a number of categories with one project receiving £100k, several schemes receiving £50k and other proposals each receiving a maximum of £10k.

Mark Powles, customer and commercial director at Northern said: "We are dedicated to making Northern's services accessible to everyone, and to playing a role in improving the communities along our routes. We want to hear suggestions for how we can continue to do this.

“I am delighted that for the second year running we have been able to provide a quarter of a million pounds to our Accessibility Innovation Scheme, which will consider a wide range of proposals involving our trains and stations and will have a positive impact for the north.”

“The fund is part of our wider project to transform our network, giving all our customers a rail service fit for the 21st Century.”

Following on from some excellent projects that were brought to life because of the Accessibility Fund in 2020/21, this scheme will once again be led and overseen by the Northern Accessibility User Group (NAUG).

This is the second year of Northern’s innovation scheme and in the last 12 months numerous schemes have been delivered and are improving access for all across West and South Yorkshire, Derbyshire, Cheshire, Lancashire and Cumbria.

The improvements have been delivered in partnership with local authorities, community rail partnerships and charities and include:

- A pilot scheme at Buxton station to improve station signage for those who are suffering from dementia
- An initiative to reduce social isolation and improve the wellbeing of people living in the region, by supporting them to access their local train services
- Tactile wayfinding for people with visual impairments
- Virtual 360° tours of Manchester Victoria and Blackburn stations

NAUG spokesperson, Mark Wilson, said: “Northern are working continuously to improve accessibility across its network and our user group is proving expert lived experience of disability to support this and we are delighted.

“The scheme cash delivered some great projects last year and we are pleased with Northern’s continued commitment which will benefit many communities across the North.”

Northern are providing administrative support and railway expertise, working side by side with NAUG to ensure the success of the initiative.

NAUG is a pan disability user group whose membership represents a very wide range of disabilities on a personal basis and from the perspective of disability groups and organisations reflecting the communities served by Northern

Ideas for the 2023 scheme could include innovations that make train travel simpler and easier, raise awareness of rail services or encourage people to travel for the first time by train.

Other applications could include how information is presented at stations or the facilities provided.

For bids to be considered, the proposed project or scheme must be scheduled for completion by 31st December 2023, be fully costed and appropriately researched. Match funding is not a requirement but will

be looked at favourably, especially for schemes with a higher overall value.

Applications can be submitted via the Northern [website](#). Applications will be considered on a rolling basis until Tuesday, 3 January 2023, with judging and awards taking place soon after.