

Greater Anglia bids to improve access at Suffolk rail stations

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Greater Anglia has submitted bids for funding to help improve access at two Suffolk rail stations.

The company put in proposals for Access for All funding – a Government funding programme for schemes to improve station access – for Needham Market and Bury St Edmunds stations.

For Needham Market, the application is part of a coordinated, partnership approach with Suffolk County Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and the Needham Market Group to try to improve access to the Ipswich-bound platform 2 at the station.

It is hoped that through this approach, enough funding can collectively be secured to implement a scheme to create better access at the station.

While there is step-free access to the Norwich-bound platform at Needham Market station, Greater Anglia currently pays for London-bound disabled passengers to travel via taxi to Ipswich, where they can continue their journey.

At Bury St Edmunds, a plan to build a new accessible entrance on the north side of the station, linking the newly-built car park with the station concourse, has support from West Suffolk Council, Bury St Edmunds Town Trust and other local organisations.

Both stations are on the Ipswich - Cambridge rail line - Greater Anglia's busiest rural route, which this year saw a 5% increase in the number of passenger journeys being made on the line.

It may be a few months before the outcomes of the bids are known, but all parties involved are committed to making the initiatives happen as soon as possible, by pursuing all practical funding avenues.

Jonathan Denby, Head of Corporate Affairs at Greater Anglia said: "Combined with the continued growth in the number of rail passengers on this line and the impressive accessibility characteristics of the new trains, there is an even greater impetus from Greater Anglia and the local authorities to try and secure the funding needed to tackle the issue.

"We are committed to improving access at these stations as soon as possible."

A spokesperson for Suffolk County Council said, "Both projects are essential to ensuring that all passengers have convenient access to rail services. Improved access to the stations will play an important role in supporting the planned growth for the towns, as well as enabling people to travel to them. With Climate Change being at the front of everyone's agenda, it is vital that we provide the facilities that enable people to travel without using their car."