

Official opening of Chatham station's £5.8m lifts and footbridge

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MP Tracey Crouch joined friends from the community and the railway to celebrate the official opening of Chatham station's £5.8 million lifts and footbridge, providing step-free access between the station entrance, ticket office and platforms.

Alongside the lift installation, funded by the Department for Transport, tactile paving on both platforms has been installed along the edge of the platforms at Chatham station to improve accessibility for people with a visual impairment.

Built by BAM Nuttall, construction of the lifts and the footbridge was notable for its use of low-carbon cement-free concrete.

The 300 cubic-metre continuous pour was the first use of the product, Cemfree, on UK rail network. Production of Cemfree reduces carbon emissions by up to 80 per cent in comparison to traditional cement-based concrete, and its use in Chatham saved approximately 62 tonnes of carbon from entering the atmosphere – the equivalent of 230,000 miles in an average-sized diesel car.

Fiona Taylor, Network Rail's Kent route director, said: "Railways should be for everyone and although we always have more to do, it's great to see Chatham becoming fully accessible.

"This investment means that more people can benefit from step-free access and with the help of funding from the DfT we're able to make sure people can navigate their way around them safely and with ease.

"In addition, this was a fantastic milestone in our sustainability strategy, bringing Cemfree low-carbon concrete to the railway for the first time. Thanks to everyone who made this project happen!"

To improve passenger safety, new CCTV cameras and a PA system have also been installed which aim to keep passengers safe when using the station.

Tracey Crouch MP for Chatham & Aylesford, said: "It is wonderful, after so long in the pipeline, that the station has fully step free access. This will revolutionise the travelling experience for many people with mobility challenges, and with an additional upgrade for those with a visual impairment, it will enable more people to use the trains in a far easier way than they have in the past."

Alan Cox, BAM Nuttall's transport managing director, said: "The success of this scheme demonstrates how collaborative working between BAM and Network Rail in the Southern region can lead to exciting innovations for the railway. This was the first time the Cemfree product rather than traditional concrete had been used on the UK rail network. We now actively look to use this sustainable alternative to concrete where feasible to support Network Rail in creating a cleaner, greener railway."

Photo credit: Network Rail