

One third of London Underground stations are now step-free, as work completes at Harrow-on-the-Hill

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Harrow-on-the-Hill Underground station on the Metropolitan line has become step-free, helping customers with reduced mobility to access the station and the wider Transport for London (TfL) network.

Four new lifts have been installed at Harrow-on-the-Hill station, providing a step-free route between the street and Metropolitan line trains. In addition, station signage has been enhanced to assist with wayfinding. Boarding ramps will continue to support customers boarding or alighting Chiltern trains, and with TfL's Turn-up-and-go service, staff will be on hand to assist customers if required.

Councillor Graham Henson, Leader of Harrow Council and Louise Weldon, Chief Executive of Harrow Association for Disabled People, joined the Mayor of London and TfL to celebrate the opening of the four new lifts at Harrow-on-the-Hill that were delivered in collaboration with Taylor Woodrow BAM Nuttall Joint Venture and Otis. The lifts will greatly improve access for customers with reduced mobility, including people travelling with heavy luggage or with children in buggies.

Sadiq Khan, Mayor of London, said: "I want all Londoners to feel comfortable and confident when using our transport system, and improving accessibility is a top priority. Harrow-on-the-Hill station becoming step-free will make a huge difference to passengers with mobility needs and the wider public, making journeys quicker and easier.

"It's great news that a third of stations on the Tube network are now step-free, with more to come during 2022 – but unless Government provides TfL with the longer-term capital funding it needs, further step-free improvements are at risk. Such investment is vital to ensure public transport is an attractive, reliable option for all, and help London and the wider country recover from the pandemic."

With the completion of step-free access schemes on the wider TfL network, the average additional journey time required for step-free journeys has now been reduced to around 6.7 minutes. This compares to 9.5 minutes in 2016, meaning significant progress has been taken towards the Mayor of London's aim of halving 2015's additional journey time of 11 minutes by 2041. Without long-term capital funding from Government, TfL will not be able to make further progress on delivering step-free stations across its network, which will mean disabled people will continue to have to take longer journeys to travel in an accessible way.

Esther Sharples, London Underground's Director of Asset Performance and Capital Delivery said: "Bringing step-free access to Harrow-on-the-Hill has been much anticipated and was undoubtedly one of the more complex projects of this type that we have completed. It's a really important milestone in our pledge to make the Underground network more accessible, and a reminder of how an affordable and reliable transport network is essential to provide everyone with equal opportunity."

The completion of the step-free scheme at Harrow-on-the-Hill increases the total number of step-free London Underground stations to 91, meaning that one third of the 272 stations on the Tube network are now step-free – a 33 per cent increase since 2016, when Sadiq Khan was first elected as Mayor of London.

Cllr Graham Henson, Leader of Harrow Council, said: "For so long many commuters including those less able and parents with prams have been left unable to use Harrow-on-the-Hill station – a key transport hub in the borough.

"Although it's been a long wait, I am delighted that step-free access is now available. It opens up Harrow for hundreds more people who were unable to access it previously.

"There are also other huge benefits – it also meets our air quality agenda by giving more people access to public transport.

"Making the station easier for everyone to use and navigate is essential and I hope the rest of the network follows this step-free step in the right direction."

In 2021, step-free access schemes were completed at Sudbury Hill (in December), Osterley (in October), Battersea Power Station and Nine Elms on the Northern Line Extension (in September), Wimbledon Park (in August), Ickenham (in June), Debden (in April) and Amersham (in February). In addition, Ealing Broadway was made step-free in May 2021 in preparation for the Elizabeth line, and Whitechapel became step-free

when the original station entrance on Whitechapel Road re-opened in August 2021.

This year, TfL will complete a range of step-free projects that are currently under construction and began prior to the pandemic. These include step-free access to the Northern line at Moorgate, which became step-free to the Circle, Hammersmith & City and Metropolitan lines last year. TfL is also progressing step-free access work that will make busy Zone 1 stations partially step-free in 2022. These are at Bank (Northern line and DLR Interchange only) and Paddington (Bakerloo line only). The current proposed designs for the redeveloped Euston station as part of High Speed 2 will also deliver step-free improvements to Euston and Euston Square station.

TfL is currently reviewing the results of its recent public consultation to help shape future step-free access priorities, with final outcomes of the consultation communicated in the summer.

Louise Weldon, CEO of Harrow Association of Disabled People, said: “We are delighted that Harrow-on-the-Hill station is finally fully accessible to disabled people. After a long campaign, the works are now complete and this will benefit our local community, especially disabled people.”

Photo credit: Transport for London