

Specialist helps to make Greater Anglia's new "game-changing" trains

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The first of Greater Anglia's brand-new trains have now entered service, with much improved accessibility features – thanks partly to an access and inclusion professional who tested wheelchair accessibility as one of the final performance and safety tests.

Last Monday, the first of 58 Stadler trains went into passenger service on the Norwich to Lowestoft and Norwich to Great Yarmouth routes.

The trains benefit from lower level floors and a retractable step at each door, which bridges the gap between station platform and train, making them more accessible for wheelchairs, buggies and people with mobility problems.

They also have an improved accessible area and accessible toilets on every train.

Dominic Lund-Conlon, who has been instrumental in the design of the accessible features of Greater Anglia's new trains, conducted an overnight test run to give his final feedback on the sliding step which will create greater independency in boarding for many people.

Dominic was also testing the bespoke portable ramps, which he played a key role in designing, which have been designed to bridge the step for those who still need to board with a ramp.

Dominic, and the team at Greater Anglia, tested the step and ramp at every station on the Norwich to Cambridge line whilst also making use of the accessible area while the train was travelling.

Dominic, who is Head of Accessibility and Inclusion at the Rail Delivery Group, said: "Working together, rail companies are introducing 7,000 new carriages across the country and the low floor trains from Stadler are a real game changer for all customers in East Anglia.

"With level boarding in many cases, improved customer information systems and large accessible toilets, the improvements are going to give new confidence to those travelling.

"The new trains have been designed in partnership between disabled people and rail professionals. The desire to deliver a train that is properly accessible includes better visual messaging for those with hearing impairments, stronger contrasts within the train and space for assistance animals where required.

"The collaborative efforts of all involved has resulted in a train fit for the future."

Rebecca Richardson, Greater Anglia accessibility manager said: "We have worked very hard with both the Stadler design team and our access and inclusion stakeholders and professionals to make sure these trains are offering a much better and more accessible journey experience for everyone.

"We took a group to Switzerland to participate in the design process and were able to offer some bespoke changes to the finished design based on their recommendations.

"With the help of this group of stakeholders, I'm confident that we have now commissioned the most accessible trains in the country."

Greater Anglia is replacing every single train with brand-new longer trains, which all have more seats, plug and USB points, free wifi, and improved passenger information screens.

Swiss manufacturer Stadler is making 38 bi-mode trains, powered by electricity and diesel, and 20 electric trains – ten for the intercity route between Norwich and London and ten for the Stansted Express route between Stansted Airport and London.