

Still no proper disabled access to Ledbury station

Written by Steve Glennie-Smith

Sunday, 07 April 2019 11:58 - Last Updated Wednesday, 10 April 2019 11:58



Ledbury station will soon be the only station in the south-west Midlands (according to [this recent written statement to Parliament](#) dated 4th April 2019) that does not have step-free access to all its platforms. The photo (right - courtesy Wikipædia), showing the only access to the Birmingham / London platform, was taken in 2008. Nothing has changed since, except the bridge has been repainted!

We sent the following message to the North Herefordshire Tories via their [website](#) :

Dear Mr. Wiggin,

You might be aware that 73 railway stations are scheduled to receive funding to provide access for everyone to all platforms:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/access-for-all-73-stations-set-to-benefit-from-additional-funding>

Ledbury station is not on this list, despite the eastbound platform falling foul of the Disability Discrimination Act ever since it became a legal requirement in 2004 for *service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' in relation to the physical features of their premises to overcome physical barriers to access*

. It is not just disabled people who are disadvantaged: mothers with baby buggies, cyclists with heavy panniers and everyone with heavy luggage are also affected. I note the last other station in this area without such access, namely Worcester Shrub Hill, has been included.

Why is Ledbury station not on the list?

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Update: to which we received the following reply:

“Thank you for your correspondence regarding Ledbury station.

On 4 April the Department of Transport published the disappointing news that Ledbury Station has not qualified under this round of the Access for All scheme.

I have spoken to the Department for Transport, who have told me that 300 nominations were considered for 73 places and that unfortunately Ledbury did not score highly enough on this occasion. Selection criteria included the level of local disability, footfall, usage, and value for money of the proposed works.

Whilst the next round of Access for All nominations will not take place until 2024, there is a much more positive note.

Today the Department announced that £20 million will be allocated to re-launch the Mid-Tier Access for All programme. This aims to provide smaller scale accessibility improvements to stations which can be delivered using £250,000 to £1 million of Government funding.

The Department for Transport will be seeking Mid-Tier nominations in due course and I very much hope that Ledbury station will be considered.

I have been campaigning for this and will never give up until we have access for all people at Ledbury Station.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me on this very important matter and I am on standby if I can be of any further assistance.

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Yours sincerely" (etc. etc.)

One reason why "footfall" has not reached "selection criteria" could be infrequency of the train service(!?!). As for "level of local disability" - **any** such level requires compliance with the DDA.

This Act went on the statute books in 1995, giving 9 years for compliance. Yet another 15 years further down the line (excuse the pun) Ledbury is still being fobbed off....

We are waiting for a response to our reply to this:

Dear Mr. Wiggin,

Thank you for your reply. Regarding the third paragraph of your response:

It is hardly surprising that 'footfall' at Ledbury station is low, given the infrequency of service. As at 15:15 on a typical weekday afternoon, according to National Rail's online live departure board, 10 trains are scheduled to depart from Worcester Shrub Hill and 5 from Abergavenny within the following 90 minutes. These nearest stations to Ledbury that do not have step-free access to all platforms are on the list of those that will receive this funding. Only 3 trains are scheduled to depart from Ledbury within this time. This obviously will show in statistics as a comparatively low footfall at Ledbury station.

As for 'level of local disability' - this has no relevance to the argument because:

1. Visitors are not included and (more importantly);
2. The law is being broken. Ledbury station has fallen foul of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) ever since the provisions of that Act which affect the station came into force in October 2004.

Whilst it might have been permissible to use the 'barrow crossing' near the signal box at one time, this is no longer allowed; the 'advice' for eastbound departures is to go to Hereford and catch the next train back. For eastbound arrivals, the advice is to go on to Colwall and catch the next train back. Neither of these is acceptable - not least that they incur an hour's delay to the total journey.

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Specifically, the DDA Section 46 (Rail vehicle accessibility regulations) sub-paras. a) and b) state:

(1) The Department of the Environment may make regulations (“rail vehicle accessibility regulations”) for the purpose of securing that it is possible -

(a) for disabled persons:

- (i) to get on to and off regulated rail vehicles in safety and without unreasonable difficulty;
- (ii) to be carried in such vehicles in safety and in reasonable comfort; and

(b) for disabled persons in wheelchairs:

- (i) to get on to and off such vehicles in safety and without unreasonable difficulty while remaining in their wheelchairs, and
- (ii) to be carried in such vehicles in safety and in reasonable comfort while remaining in their wheelchairs.

While this section refers to 'rail vehicles', the words 'get on to and off regulated rail vehicles' logically must include railway stations and facilities (or lack of) at such stations.

To some extent, this has been superseded by Section 29 of the Equality Act 2010. Subsections 1 and 2 read:

(1) A person (a “service-provider”) concerned with the provision of a service to the public or a section of the public (for payment or not) must not discriminate against a person requiring the service by not providing the person with the service.

(2) A service-provider (A) must not, in providing the service, discriminate against a person (B) -

- (a) as to the terms on which A provides the service to B;
- (b) by terminating the provision of the service to B;
- (c) by subjecting B to any other detriment.

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The *service provider* is West Midlands Railway (WMR), who also manage the station. '*Any other detriment*'

clearly includes lack of disabled access to one or more platforms from which access to the *service provider's* trains (and those of other train operating companies) is required.

I am lucky, as a cyclist, that the lack of step-free access to Ledbury's eastbound platform is only an inconvenience, but it sometimes means (owing to weight) I have to remove panniers from my bike to take it across the footbridge on its own, and then go back for the panniers, with the attendant risk of theft.

Whilst on the subject of poor rail provision in Ledbury (a town that is scheduled to expand considerably over the next decade), the infrequent service is just one problem. Overcrowding is another: WMR often runs 2-coach units at busy times which, given the infrequent service, frequently results in dangerous overcrowding east of Worcester. Since 'our' service to Birmingham New Street takes 20 minutes less than the alternative (from Worcester to Moor Street via Kidderminster), it is hardly surprising 'our' trains are popular with Worcester folk. I have complained a number of times to WMR and to its predecessor, London Midland, but have not received a satisfactory response. Indeed, one of the promises made by WMR when it took over the franchise in December 2017 was more frequent trains and more coaches on them. In reality, the only change is the trains have been painted in WMR colours - at I would imagine some considerable cost.

I am fully aware that the single track sections between Hereford and Malvern, and between Droitwich and Bromsgrove, severely restrict the frequency that trains can run on those sections. However, this has no effect on the number of coaches there could be on a train. Given the number of trains standing idle in the marshalling yard between Worcester's two stations every time I travel that way, there cannot be a lack of rolling stock.

Lack of proper access to Ledbury's eastbound platform and the infrequent overcrowded rail service act as deterrents to rail travel; a vicious circle that risks reducing footfall even further.

I am glad to hear that you are campaigning for improvements to Ledbury station, and I wish you success in getting funding for the station from the Mid-Tier Access for All programme. Might I

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ask you also campaign to improve the town's rail service.