

# Title: **Petition P-05-918 Improve disabled access to Treforest train station as a priority.**

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 3 Rhagfyr 2019  
Petitions Committee | 3 December 2019

**Reference:** RS19/11038 – 1

**Petition Number:** P-05-918

**Petition title:** Improve disabled access to Treforest train station as a priority.

**Text of petition:** We call on the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to prioritise upgrades to Treforest Railway Station to enable disabled students to access the University of South Wales sustainably and with dignity.

Treforest railway station provides the primary public transport access to the University of South Wales. Transport for Wales has promised to invest in railway stations across Wales as part of a 15 year improvement programme but for many disabled young people wishing to access a university education independently, these improvements will come too late.

Current arrangements at the station require disabled people to call for help then wait for station staff to come and virtually manhandle them across the footbridge. This is inappropriate and falls short of the access standards we should expect for disabled people in the 21st century. We the undersigned ask the National Assembly for Wales to urge the Welsh Government to prioritise improvements to Treforest station, in particular to provide suitable disability access.



## 1. Background

Treforest railway station is a station on the Merthyr Line and Rhondda Line forming part of the Cardiff Valleys rail network. The station serves the village of Treforest and the Treforest Campus of the University of South Wales.

Services have been operated by Transport for Wales (TfW) Rail Services since the new Wales and Borders Rail Franchise contract was awarded to KeolisAmey in October 2018.

The TfW Rail Services website indicates that at present the station does not have step free access to platforms, available wheelchairs or 'impaired mobility set down'. The station also does not currently have a toilet – accessible or otherwise.

The latest Welsh Government rail station usage statistical release showed that Treforest station was the 12<sup>th</sup> busiest of the 222 stations in Wales in 2017-18 with about 750,000 entries and exits – a decline of 7.1% from the previous year.

The Merthyr and Rhondda Lines form part of what the Welsh Government and TfW refer to as the Core Valleys Lines (CVL) – the central valleys lines which will be electrified during the delivery of phase 2 of the development of the South East Wales Metro.

Rail infrastructure in Wales is not devolved and is the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport. Like most railway lines in Britain, the CVL are currently owned by Network Rail. However, the Welsh Government is negotiating the transfer of ownership of the CVL from Network Rail to the Welsh Government.

In May 2019 the Minister for Economy and Transport, Ken Skates AM, told the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills (EIS) Committee that the transfer was expected to be completed by 20 September. However, at time of writing no announcement has been made.

The contract awarded to TfWRail Services is to act as Operator and Development Partner (ODP), developing and delivering plans for the CVL as well as operating services. The Welsh Government, via TfW, plans to invest £738m in electrifying and upgrading the CVL – including investment in stations.

In May, the Minister told the EIS Committee that preliminary design work began in February, and that 'within the next 12 or 18 months we'll start seeing structures appearing on the core Valleys lines'.

TfW's website says the project will involve 'upgrading all our stations and signalling'. It has also said it is 'improving accessibility at our stations and on our trains as well as

installing toilet facilities at a number of Metro stations'. In a [June 2018 written statement](#) the then Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Transport said:

The rolling stock used for the South Wales Metro will be a combination of Metro Vehicles and tri-mode trains, all of which will be equipped for level boarding....

## 2. Welsh Government action

The Minister's letter to the Chair responding to this petition indicates that TfW is currently developing plans for Treforest station:

These plans will bring vastly improved access arrangements and better facilities for customers. TfW's plans include a new accessible footbridge and level boarding providing step-free access from the street, to the train. Construction at the station is expected to begin in 2020.

This letter draws attention to the fact that the works are part of the wider Metro programme which will take around five years to complete. The Minister says he has:

... asked Transport for Wales to explore the possibility of commencing the fund design earlier, which may lead to an earlier construction date. However this cannot be guaranteed due to the complex interdependencies of this project in relation to the wider programme of works.

## 3. National Assembly for Wales action

There does not appear to have been any discussion of accessibility issues at Treforest Station in this Assembly. However, [following his June 2018 oral statement](#) announcing the award of the franchise to KeolisAmey the then Cabinet Secretary replied to questions from Russell George AM to say:

There are a number of stations that I know of personally, including my own station of Ruabon, that do not have step-free access, or additional access to step-only access. That will be resolved in the coming franchise arrangements. Every station within the metro area will also be step-free accessible. And in terms of toilets, there will be additional toilets on stations within the metro network to ensure that, for the solution within the core Valleys lines network, no passenger will have to wait more than 14 minutes in order to gain access to a universal access toilet.

In 2017 the Petitions Committee held an inquiry into petition [P-05-710 Ensure Disabled People can Access Public Transport As and When They Need it](#). The Committee

published its report in October 2017, one year before the award of the new rail contract. Two of its recommendations were particularly relevant to this petition:

**Recommendation 2:** The Welsh Government should press Network Rail and the UK Government to deliver physical improvements to stations in Wales which are inaccessible to people with disabilities, and use its own powers to continue to invest in accessible infrastructure as budgets allow.

And

**Recommendation 4.** The Welsh Government and Transport for Wales must ensure that the final specification for the next Wales and Borders rail franchise and future Metro developments includes a requirement for significant improvements in the accessibility of train services and Metro infrastructure across all aspects of service provision. It should consider including improved accessibility as a core contractual obligation on the successful operator and development partner.

Both were accepted by the Welsh Government.

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.