

NEWS

‘Very disappointing’ as rail station loses funding for step-free access

JASON CHADWICK

Lucy Ball

lucy.ball@nationalworld.com

The Government has announced that 19 stations across the UK will be losing funding for step-free access, including the long campaigned-for Chinley Station.

Chinley Station platforms are in the middle of the tracks and accessed by a footbridge with steps at either side.

For years campaigners have been calling for improvements to the station, saying it is not suitable for wheelchair users, the elderly or those with pushchairs or large luggage.

The Department for Transport's 2024 round of Access for All funding announced Chinley Station had made the list for the first time, much to the delight of campaigners.

But in 2025 there were rumours that the funding would be axed and it was announced formally by Lord Hendy from the Department for Transport last Thursday (January 15) that Chinley is one of 19 stations which 'will not be progressing at this point'.

Independent county councillor Ruth for Whaley Bridge & Blackbrook, who was formerly the MP for High Peak and involved in the campaigning for step free access, has spoken out about the loss of funding.

She said: "It's very disappointing that the Government has decided that Chinley station will not be supported to become accessible, in spite of all the work over many years from Chinley and Buxworth Transport Group – and the increasing passengers using Chinley.

"The statement makes it clear that the government expects communities to raise their own funding before the government is prepared to support 'access for all'.

"This fails to recognise that such significant fundraising is far more difficult in rural areas where communities already do so much fundraising for local facilities – such as the new Chinley Community Centre.

"It sends the message that the needs of people with disabilities are less important in areas like Chinley, when that should never be the case."

Mrs George says she has written to the minister and to the East Midlands Mayor (who is now responsible for strategic transport in Derbyshire) to invite them to see for themselves the prob-

lems of access at Chinley and to meet with local residents to seek a way forward.

Mrs George vowed to 'continue to campaign for safe access for everyone at Chinley Station'.

Lord Hendy added: "Since 2006, the Access for All (Afa) programme has delivered step-free accessible routes at over 270 stations.

"In May 2024, the previous government announced feasibility work on 50 stations without indicating how the delivery of such schemes would be funded, raising significant stakeholder expectations.

"This government is committed to a rigorous approach and only making commitments we believe are affordable and would represent value for money to passengers and taxpayers.



'Very disappointing' as Chinley station loses funding for step free access after years of campaigning. Photo Jason Chadwick

"As such, ministers have carefully considered the findings of the initial feasibility work and have decided which will progress."

The Minister for Transport noted A future round of Afa may be funded as part of the next spending review and this could provide an opportunity to fully or partially fund accessibility upgrades at other stations across Britain and third-party funding contributions will be a key consideration in choosing future Afa schemes.