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Access for All funding for Battersea Park station

I am writing in response to the announcement from the Department for Transport (DfT) that Battersea Park station in my constituency is to receive funding from the Access for All scheme, along with 41 other station sites nationwide. This is, of course, excellent news, as, in spite of previous efforts, the station has suffered from inadequate access for many years.

Currently, the platforms at Battersea Park station are accessed via steep, wooden staircases, and are consequently unusable by elderly, infirm or physically disabled passengers. Furthermore, Battersea is an area with many younger families (my constituency has the highest proportion of 25–44 year olds in the UK – almost 50 per cent), and the stairs present a significant obstacle to those with pushchairs, and those with luggage.

The commitment for funding having been secured from the DfT, I understand that Network Rail will now undertake more detailed design and feasibility consideration before deciding how to allocate the funds among the chosen sites, and that previous work under the Access for All scheme has included improvements such as new ramps, tactile pavements and lifts. Clearly, whilst any measure to improve access would be welcomed by my constituents, I am firmly of the view that the installation of a lift is the most practical and beneficial option to address access problems at the station. This view is shared by many of my constituents who use the station, as well as staff at Southern Rail, which runs services to and from the station. I therefore wanted to write to you to express my strong support for a lift.

Of course, I understand that there may be challenges in installing a lift, not least that the station is Grade II listed. However, with careful and sensitive planning, I believe that it would be possible to install a lift at the station, and this view has been reaffirmed to me by several experts from Southern Rail's restoration and design team. It seems to me that the layout inside the station is such that, realistically, it is not clear that a ramp or tactile paving would have the optimum impact on improving access, or how they could be incorporated comfortably into the existing station layout without potentially compromising the protections given to the station through its listed status. A lift, by contrast, would have a smaller overall footprint within the limited space of the beautifully-restored ticket hall.

The installation of a lift is also supported by the Southern Rail team working at the station. I have met with members of staff who inform me that they frequently have to assist elderly or infirm people, and parents with pushchairs, up and down the steps to and from the platforms, something I have also witnessed on previous visits. A lift would, therefore, be beneficial in this respect. Design and restoration experts at Southern Rail have also informed me that they feel that it would be better for funds to be invested in a lift, which would provide a far more sustainable and lasting solution to access problems at Battersea Park station, and may well increase use of the station as access is improved.

I would be most grateful if you could consider these points as you undertake feasibility work. Once a decision is made, it would also be very helpful to have a clearer timetable for the proposed access works to be started and completed, although I appreciate that this will probably depend on the nature of the work which is undertaken.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Kind regards

Jane Ellison

Member of Parliament for Battersea, Balham & Wandsworth

cc: Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP, Secretary of State for Transport

cc: Mr Chris Burchell, Managing Director, Southern Rail