

Bedfordshire Rail Access Campaign update re Biggleswade, Sandy and Arlesey stations

- Funding has been approved for an assessment into the improvements required prior to putting forward an official bid for funding (surprised not done in previous years).
- GNR have highlighted Biggleswade, Flitwick, Leagrave, Kentish Town, Harringay and Mill Hill stations as priorities.
- Biggleswade station car park will be resurfaced in some 6-8 weeks and the crossing repainted.
- We insisted that disabled people are involved during any assessments and planning for access improvements 'design with us not for us; plan with us not without us'. GNR agreed to liaise with us going forward.
- CBC confirmed there is no Disability Access Group to discuss access issues – something disabled groups have demanded for a number of years. (An assurance was given that this will be looked into – we will be pushing for this)
- GNR does have a Disability Access Group but is not aware if they had visited the stations in our area. They will check the group which covers their franchise area for local representation. We will be asking for representation if there is no local involvement.
- We pointed out inaccuracies on the National Rail website in relation to station accessibility – particularly re Sandy station which is described as 'accessible' when it clearly is not. If Sandy is (incorrectly) described as accessible, it may reduce the chances of funding for Biggleswade, as one factor in the decision-making process is the distance to the nearest 'accessible' station.
- We raised the issue of the lack of a riser in Biggleswade station steps, as being able to see through the steps is very disconcerting for visually impaired people.
- Sandy station – an accessible toilet will be provided on the N/B platform and a ticket machine on the S/B within this financial year. Solutions are being sought re disabled parking on the S/B side.
- Arlesey station – additional shelter to be installed on the N/B platform. We requested a ticket machine on the N/B platform and mentioned the lack of a safe disabled route from new car park to station. Arlesey is also described as 'accessible' on the NR website, and we will be raising this also.
- Bids for funding are priority listed, and NR has agreed to make this list public in future.
- GNR is looking at improvements at Biggleswade station with a view to location of a taxi office.
- CBC is again looking at a Transport Interchange at Biggleswade and plans should be completed by the end of this year. We asked that disabled people be consulted on this.
- S106 funding (money paid to the council from housing developers) can be used for improvements to station access – as was the case with St Neots station which now has lifts.
- A public meeting will be arranged, most likely in September, to discuss progress on the above.

