

## **SARAH BOYACK MSP**

### **WRITTEN SUBMISSION**

I am writing in my capacity as an MSP for the Lothian region to provide the committee with feedback to assist its above named inquiry.

Accessibility to railway stations in Edinburgh has been a longstanding concern raised with me by a number of constituents. However, over the past year the issue has been exacerbated by changes to access arrangements affecting Edinburgh Waverley in particular. The following comments reflect the views expressed to me by constituents.

#### **Access for pedestrians and cyclists**

The site of Edinburgh Waverley Station in the valley between the city's Old Town and New Town provides particular challenges for access.

Access to the station from the Waverley Steps, Market Street and Calton Road all require customers to negotiate a number of steps which can present particular challenges, particularly for disabled passengers, those with luggage and cyclists. While each of these entrances has options via lifts and/or escalators, I am aware of numerous occasions where these options have been affected by technical difficulties.

In addition, the Calton Road entrance presents particular issues due to the lack of cover. I have raised concerns on behalf of disabled constituents who have been soaked while waiting for assistance to access the station.

The remaining entrance to the station from Waverley Bridge is via a narrow foot paths. At busy times of day, the routes can become particularly congested making it difficult to negotiate, particularly for those with mobility issues. There is also considerable frustration among cyclists that they are required to dismount at the top of the ramp when it would be more convenient to cycle down. The footpath runs alongside the access road formerly used by taxis but now lies unused.

I believe there is scope for a more appropriate design for this access path to aid passenger flow. I have also raised with Network Rail the possibility of dispensation for taxis entering the station where they are carrying a disabled passenger.

Inside the station itself, access to platforms is complicated by the design of the station. Some platforms are a significant distance from any of the entrances (e.g. platform 7 requires passengers to board trains across the track from the City of Edinburgh Council buildings) while others require passengers to climb and descend further stairs to access (e.g platforms 8-10) This situation is exacerbated by poor signage.

## **Integration with Public Transport**

For passengers wishing to access buses and trams, the Waverley Steps are the most appropriate exit. However, as referred to above, the range of escalators and lifts have been prone to technical issues.

A particular concern has emerged regarding access to taxis following the decision by Network Rail to ban vehicles from entering the station via Waverley Bridge. The station has previously performed poorly in relation to air quality and this was in part used to justify the removal of taxis. While I appreciate the need to improve air quality, both from a health and a customer satisfaction perspective, I believe that a blanket ban has caused problems. This would surely be an opportunity to help promote low emission vehicles by allowing them to enter the station.

Following their removal from the station, the main taxi rank for the station is situated at the Market Street exit. In order to access this exit from platform level would require access to two lifts for people with mobility issues and this situation is less than ideal. Additionally, signage for access to taxi ranks is not clear. The design of the taxi rank itself is also an issue – in particular, it is not clear which side of Market Street that passengers are encouraged to access taxis.

I hope you will be able to consider my comments as part of the inquiry. I very much welcome the fact that the Committee has decided to investigate this issue as this is an important issue for many passengers.

**Sarah Boyack MSP**  
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