

# ACCESS ALL AREAS

Spotlighting Inclusivity in Gloucestershire

## Improvements

A big recent development is the new accessible carriage. Over the course of a decade, dedicated volunteers, supervised by Western Steam Engineering have painstakingly refurbished the cargo carriage to create a welcoming space where wheelchair and mobility scooter users can fully enjoy the experience. Inside the new carriage heritage benches and luggage racks give an authentic feel, with unobstructed space in between for mobility vehicles.

## Challenges

As a Heritage Railway, obtaining permission for modifications that could impact the station's aesthetics can be challenging. The unusual organisational structure including one business managing the railway as a visitor attraction, one charity focusing on historical preservation, and one separate museum business can present challenges to securing funding. Decision-making involves aligning lots of parties, which can be complex.

## Future thinking

Dean Forest Railway team has ambitious plans for future developments, their goals include refurbishing toilet blocks at all stations and introducing a Changing Places toilet at the main station. They are also considering how to implement Mental Health First Aid training across their team of four core staff members and over 150 volunteers. Additionally, there are plans to refurbish the platforms and introduce terrain markers to assist visually impaired visitors.

## Unexpected solutions

The main station shop layout was redesigned during the pandemic to provide more space and create a one-way flow of traffic. This adjustment proved particularly helpful for wheelchair users and individuals with mobility devices and has been kept in place.

## Transport

The main station has good public transportation links, the Southern Terminus is conveniently close to the mainland terminal, where visitors can access trains from across the country. An hourly bus service runs in both directions towards Coleford and Gloucester, with a bus stop conveniently located outside the Dean Forest Railway Main Station. The main station car park offers eight blue badge holder spaces, monitored by volunteers and staff during peak periods.



“Fantastic afternoon, kids loved it.

There were 2 adults and 4 children in our party, eldest son is in a wheelchair. The staff couldn't do enough for us from the moment we arrived and we felt very welcome.

We had our own wheelchair friendly carriage and the staff were amazing. Santa, the elves and the snowman came in and were very chatty with everyone and really took the time to make us feel welcome.

Loved it so much we've just booked again for this year and can't wait”

Vistor