**Accessibility and Inclusion Forum**

**Application pack**

In 2018, South Western Railway (SWR) worked with Disability Rights UK to set up an Accessibility and Inclusion Forum made up of a group of Deaf and disabled SWR customers with a range of access requirements when travelling. SWR consult the Forum on issues relating to access for Deaf and disabled customers, and the Forum share their experiences to help SWR better understand where we need to improve the accessibility of our services.

**We are now planning to expand the work of the Forum and are looking for between 4 and 6 new members.**

This application pack contains information about the Forum and the expectations we have of members, and an application form. It also contains information about the payment for being a Forum member.

If you are interested in joining the Forum, please read through this pack before filling in the application form so you are aware of what being a Forum member involves.

We look forward to hearing from you!

**Need an alternative format?**

If you need this information in another format, it is available on our website as:

* Large print
* Audio
* EasyRead
* BSL

If you need a format that is not listed above, please contact the Accessibility Team at accessibility@swrailway.com

If you are not able to use the application form, you can send the Accessibility Team an email with your answers to the questions.

**In this pack**

* SWR’s commitment to accessibility and inclusion
* About the Forum
* Terms of Reference for the Forum
* The Forum’s commitment to the Social Model of Disability
* Forum Member Agreement

**What to do next**

If you are interested in joining the Forum:

* Read through this pack so you are aware of what being a Forum member involves
* Download the separate application form
* Fill in the application form – you can send an email with your answers if you are not able to use the form
* You do not need to sign the Member Agreement at this point – we will ask you to sign it if you become a member

Please send your application to us by Friday 23rd April 2021.

After you have sent your application, we will:

* Contact you after Friday 30th April to let you know whether we would like to talk to you more about joining
* Arrange a phone call or video call to chat to you about your application
* Make a final decision about who the new Forum members will be
* Let you know by Monday 17th May about our decision

The first meeting with the new Forum members will be Tuesday 25th May, 11.00am – 1.00pm.

**Any more questions?**

If you have any more questions after reading through this pack, you can contact the Accessibility Team at accessibility@swrailway.com

**SWR’s commitment to accessibility and inclusion**

SWR is committed to making our services accessible and inclusive to Deaf, disabled and older people, and other customers who have access requirements or need assistance.

**Our work so far**

The work we’ve done so far to make our services accessible and inclusive includes:

* 126 of our 187 managed stations are step-free
* Our managed stations have a range of other accessible features and facilities, including:
	+ 187 stations with Help Points
	+ 139 stations with induction loops at the ticket office window
	+ 74 stations with accessible toilets
* All of our trains have some accessibility features. All include a wheelchair space and a visually contrasting interior to make it easier for visually impaired customers to use, and many have accessible toilets.
* We provide booked assistance to around 70,000 disabled customers a year.
* We have put in several schemes to make it easier for customers with non-visible impairments to communicate their assistance requirements to our staff:
	+ The sunflower lanyard, card and badge scheme – this enables customers to more easily flag to staff that they may need assistance
	+ Our own Travel Assistance card – this enables customers to write what assistance they need and communicate it to staff without having to explain

We have also recently begun several new projects and initiatives to make our services more accessible and inclusive:

* Producing an SWR Face Covering Exemption Card to give peace of mind to exempt customers who are travelling on our network during the COVID-19 pandemic.
* Developing a card for assistance dog users to be able to request that the seat next to them be kept free so that sufficient space is available for their dog.
* Developing a new one-day Disability Equality Training session for frontline staff and beginning to roll this out.
* Producing EasyRead versions of a number of our key customer information leaflets.

You can find out more about our accessible services and the assistance we can provide to Deaf, disabled and older customers on our website:

<https://www.southwesternrailway.com/travelling-with-us/assisted-travel>

**Future improvements**

We recognise that there are still many things that we need to do to make our services as accessible and inclusive as possible.

Our current plans include:

* Expanding the work of our Accessibility and Inclusion Forum
* Improving our provision of customer information about accessible journeys
* Improving the reliability of our Assisted Travel service
* Introducing Assisted Boarding Points and a process for making it easier to get assistance without pre-booking

We will also be working with the Accessibility and Inclusion Forum to identify other improvements required.

**About SWR’s Accessibility and Inclusion Forum**

In 2018, South Western Railway (SWR) worked with Disability Rights UK to set up an Accessibility and Inclusion Forum made up of a group of Deaf and disabled SWR customers with a range of access requirements when travelling. SWR consult the Forum on issues relating to access for Deaf, disabled and older customers, and the Forum share their experiences to help SWR better understand where we need to improve the accessibility of our services. The Forum has adopted the Social Model of Disability – see page 9.

The work that the Forum have inputted into so far includes:

* SWR’s Accessible Travel Policy
* SWR’s Accessibility Plan
* Disability Equality Training for SWR staff
* Areas of station and train design
* Disabled people’s concerns about access to public transport during the COVID-19 pandemic

SWR are keen to expand the work of the Forum. This includes:

* Paying Forum members for their time and expertise.
* Increasing the number of Forum meetings from 3 a year to 4 a year.
* Including a requirement for Forum members to provide additional input into SWR’s work in relation to accessibility in between meetings – up to a maximum of 2 hours work between each meeting.
* Where possible, ‘co-producing’ projects and initiatives with the Forum – if it is not possible to do this during Forum meetings, it would be offered as an additional, paid piece of work.
* Exploring new areas of SWR’s work that the Forum can input into.
* Developing stronger links between the Forum and teams within different areas of SWR.
* Raising the profile of the Forum outside of SWR.

**Accessibility and Inclusion Forum**

**Terms of Reference**

**Aims of the Forum**

* To assist SWR to identify, design, develop and implement solutions for removing the barriers that Deaf and disabled people face to using SWR’s services.
* To assist SWR to identify, design, develop and implement solutions for making SWR’s services more inclusive of Deaf and disabled people.

**Objectives of the Forum**

* To highlight to SWR the barriers that Deaf and disabled people face to using SWR’s services
* To propose solutions to for removing the barriers that Deaf and disabled people face to using SWR’s services
* To propose solutions for making SWR’s services more inclusive of Deaf and disabled people
* To be consulted by SWR about potential and in-progress accessibility improvement projects and initiatives
* To be a ‘critical friend’ to SWR, providing honest and constructive feedback in the spirit of achieving positive change
* To demonstrate the benefit to the wider business within SWR of consulting with Deaf and disabled people at an early stage when developing and implementing services.

**Membership, structure and governance**

* The Forum consists of 8 – 10 Deaf and disabled people who use or would like to use SWR services and have between them a range of access requirements when travelling.
* All Forum members must consider themselves to be Deaf or disabled people.
* The Forum is managed by SWR’s Senior Accessibility Manager.
* The Forum is chaired by a representative of Disability Rights UK
* The Chair and SWR’s Senior Accessibility Manager will share responsibility for co-ordinating the agenda (with input from members), taking minutes and sending out papers and other documents to the Forum.
* Other colleagues from SWR may attend the meetings as guests on request or by invitation.
* A summary of the Forum’s activity will be provided by SWR’s Senior Accessibility Manager to the Deputy Customer Experience Director every three months.

**Meetings and other input required**

* The Forum will meet four times a year, roughly every three months. Sometimes meetings will be less evenly spread out in order to consult on specific projects or initiatives.
* Meeting dates will be arranged with Forum members, in order to achieve maximum attendance. Meetings will be arranged at least 4 weeks in advance.
* Meetings will last for a maximum of 2 hours. It is expected that there will be no break during this, unless this is required in order to meet a member’s access requirements.
* Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on meeting others in person, Forum meetings will take place over Zoom for the foreseeable future. When it is safe and appropriate to travel and meet again, the Forum will make decisions about how they will meet in future, which will take account of members’ access requirements and, to an extent, location.
* Between meetings, Forum members may be asked to provide additional input – for example, reviewing a document. We understand that it may not always be possible for all members to provide input every time. However, it is expected that members will make all efforts to do so, and to provide up to 2 hours of additional input between meetings.

**Expenses and financial incentives**

* Forum members will be paid £100 per meeting for their time and expertise. This will include providing up to 2 hours of additional input between meetings.
* If members are required to travel and it is possible to make this journey using SWR’s services, we can provide a letter giving authority to travel for free.
* Forum members will be offered the opportunity to take up other paid consultation activities run by SWR.

**Communication and information**

* Communication between the Forum, the Chair and the SWR Senior Accessibility Manager will primarily be through email.
* Until it is safe and appropriate to meet in person, Forum meetings will take place over Zoom for the foreseeable future.
* Communication support for meetings (including online meetings), such as BSL interpreters or Speech-to-Text reporters, will be provided as required.
* Alternative formats of Forum agendas, minutes and meeting papers will be available as required.
* Every effort will be made to provide other documents sent to the Forum for input in alternative formats where required.

**Accessibility and Inclusion Forum**

**Commitment to the Social Model of Disability**

**The Forum has adopted the Social Model of Disability.**

Disabled people are often prevented from participating in society (e.g. education, employment or leisure activities) which can result in a poorer quality of life. Traditionally, disabled people’s impairments were seen as the cause of this disadvantage. This is now known as the Medical Model of Disability, and says that, for example, the reason a disabled person can’t work is because they can’t walk.

The Social Model of Disability was developed in the 1970s and 80s by disabled people and disabled people’s organisations as a challenge to the Medical Model. It turns the Medical Model on its head and says that the disadvantage that disabled people face is not caused by their impairments, it is caused by a society which doesn’t take account of those impairments and has created barriers to participation. Barriers may be physical (e.g. lack of accessible toilets), related to information / communication (e.g. no alternatives to printed text) or attitudinal (e.g. prejudice or pity), and these barriers ‘disable’ people with impairments.

The Medical Model’s solution to the disadvantage that disabled people face is to ‘fix’ their impairments or provide ‘special’ services for them. The Social Model’s solution is to remove disabling barriers so that people with impairments can participate fully in mainstream society.

Difficulties accessing public transport can prevent disabled people from getting to and from work, college or university or sports or cultural activities. The Forum believes that the Social Model of Disability helps identify practical solutions to this through removing barriers within the public transport system – such as inaccessible stations, inaccessible information about services or lack of appropriate assistance from transport staff.

**Accessibility and Inclusion Forum**

**Member Agreement**

**[Please do not sign the Member Agreement now. If you become a member of the Forum we will ask you to sign this, but not before.]**

SWR values the important work that the Accessibility and Inclusion Forum does to advise the company of issues impacting on Deaf, disabled and older customers when they use the SWR network.

This agreement is intended to set out what SWR expects from Forum members, and what Forum members can expect from SWR, in order that the Forum can perform its role effectively.

All Forum members must sign the Member Agreement.

**As an SWR Forum member, I agree to:**

* Attend at least three of the four Forum meetings held each year (broadly these will be held in January, April, July and October).
* Respond in a timely way to requests for information about when I am available for meetings.
* Send apologies to the Chair in advance if I cannot attend a meeting.
* During meetings, to:
	+ Arrive promptly for the start of the meeting.
	+ Contribute to the discussion as much as possible.
	+ Help keep the discussion on-topic.
	+ Behave in the way agreed in the ground rules developed by the Forum.
* When requested to input into work in between meetings:
	+ Wherever possible, provide input, up to a maximum of 2 hours in between each meeting.
	+ Send feedback by the date requested.
	+ If it is not possible to input on a particular occasion, to advise the Chair / SWR of this.
* Advise the Chair:
	+ What my access requirements are to be able to participate in the work of the Forum.
	+ On an ongoing basis, if I am experiencing any barriers to participating in the work of the Forum.
* Sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA) to agree to keep the information that is commercially sensitive confidential.
* Inform the Chair of any conflicts of interest that may arise.

**I can expect SWR to:**

* Pay Forum members £100 for each Forum meeting attended – this include up to 2 hours of additional input in between each meeting.
* Meet Forum members’ access requirements to be able to participate in the work of the Forum.
* Take prompt action if there is a report of harassment or discrimination by a Forum member or SWR staff member against a Forum member.
* Give 4 weeks’ notice of Forum meeting dates.
* Issues an agenda and minutes for each Forum meeting.
* Start and finish meetings promptly.
* Give the Forum at least 1 weeks’ notice for additional input required.
* Keep the Forum updated about what is happening as a result of their feedback and input.
* Not hold the Forum responsible for any decisions made by SWR as a result of their feedback and input.

**I agree to the above requirements.**

**I have also read and agree to the Forum’s Terms of Reference.**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Name | Signature | Date |
| Forum member |  |  |  |
| Senior Accessibility Manager, SWR |  |  |  |