

# Accessibility and inclusion

**We are committed to building an inclusive railway that benefits everyone. An accessible network opens up opportunities for people who may previously have faced physical, cultural, or social barriers to travel.**

By working closely with people who have lived experience of disability, we aim to eliminate barriers from the outset and reduce the need for individual assistance, giving people more freedom and supporting independent movement.

Our goal is to create spaces that are accessible (removing physical, sensory, and digital barriers) and inclusive (welcoming and usable for everyone in the community). To achieve this, we are using a 'human-centred design' approach throughout the development of the railway system.

## What is human-centred design?

Human-centred design is an approach to problem-solving that places the needs, experiences and perspectives of people at the heart of the design process. It begins long before the railway is built and continues throughout its construction.

We are currently:

- Identifying gaps between industry standards and good practice in rail
- Embedding a culture that values accessibility and inclusion
- Considering the needs of customers, colleagues, our supply chain and the communities we serve both now and in the future

## Customer needs we are considering

We are designing for a wide range of users, including:

- People who use wheelchairs
- People who are deaf or hard of hearing
- People with visual impairments
- People living with dementia
- Neurodivergent people
- People with mobility impairments
- People travelling with young children
- People with non-visible impairments
- People carrying luggage

## Accessibility Advisory Panel

We have a responsibility to consider how our design decisions affect people from protected groups under the Equality Act 2010, particularly disabled people. To support this, we have established an Accessibility Advisory Panel made up of local people along the route with lived experience of disability.

The panel plays a vital role in shaping the design of the railway. By meeting regularly with members to discuss proposals, explore real-world travel experiences and review early design concepts, we gain valuable insight into how our plans work in practice.

Their feedback helps us identify barriers, test design assumptions and spot opportunities to improve accessibility before designs are finalised.

Engaging the panel early in the project ensures inclusive design principles are embedded across the whole railway - from stations and platforms to level crossings, trains and digital services. This collaborative approach strengthens our design process and helps us create environments that work better for everyone.

Examples of areas of design we have already engaged and received feedback on include:

- Stations
- Trains
- Footbridges
- Public Rights of Way
- Digital accessibility

You can read more about our Accessibility Advisory Panel here on our website at [eastwestrail.co.uk/planning/accessibility-and-inclusion/accessibility-advisory-panel](https://eastwestrail.co.uk/planning/accessibility-and-inclusion/accessibility-advisory-panel)

## Network Rail Built Environment Accessibility Panel

We are also engaging with the Network Rail Built Environment Accessibility Panel on key areas of design to get specialist guidance on standards, regulations and good practice for accessibility in the built environment.

Examples of areas of design we have already engaged and received feedback on include:

- Station design principles
- Footbridges
- Public Rights of Way

## Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Inclusive Design Overlay (IDO)

East West Rail has been applying the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Inclusive Design Overlay (IDO), which provides guidance for embedding inclusive design at every stage of the RIBA Plan of Work, from the earliest stages of design and will continue to do so as the project progresses. Embedding this guidance throughout the process ensures inclusion and accessibility is at the heart of every design decision.

This approach demonstrates our commitment to creating environments that are more accessible, welcoming and enjoyable for everyone who uses the railway. We have also shared a case study showcasing our early work on implementing the IDO, which is now available on the RIBA website at [riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work/east-west-rail](https://riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work/east-west-rail)


If you would like more information on RIBA's IDO you can find it at [riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work](https://riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work)

### Get in touch

If you have any questions, please get in touch using the details below:

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