

A campaign has been launched by the Pokesdown Community Forum (PCF) asking Network Rail to install new lifts at Pokesdown Railway Station.

The platform for the busy local station is below street level and can only be accessed by 42 very steep steps which cause serious difficulties for people with mobility problems, those with young children in pushchairs and passengers with heavy luggage.

Pokesdown is the second busiest local station in the area, with 312,000 users in 2011-12 alone. It serves half of the town of Bournemouth and is the main station for visitors to Boscombe, Southbourne and AFC Bournemouth and is therefore crucial for the town's tourism, yet there have been no lifts working on the station for around 30 years.

Government funds do exist to make railways stations accessible under a scheme called 'Access for All', a major programme improving accessibility at train stations nationwide by installing lifts and ramps. The fund has paid for 150 stations to be improved since 2006, benefitting the elderly, disabled and those with young families. A further £100m will be available from 2015 to 2019, but the Department for Transport is not currently considering Pokesdown for a share of this funding.

The Pokesdown Community Forum have decided to spearhead the campaign, following overwhelming pleas from station users, and are galvanising public support by launching an online 'change.org' petition.

Andy Jones, Secretary of the Forum said: "The PCF is currently in consultation with South West Trains and Network Rail in order to try and remedy this totally unsatisfactory situation where the elderly, disabled and those with young families are unable to access the station platforms. Members of the Forum Committee and various local area representatives will be meeting the local MP, Tobias Ellwood on 28th February to see what can be done to obtain the necessary funding to enable installation of the lifts."

Since launching the campaign just over 2 weeks ago, over 400 people have signed the online petition with many others contacting the PCF through their website, facebook and twitter pages to add their support.

The PCF are joined in the campaign by a range of groups including Bournemouth Chamber of Commerce, Southbourne Business Association and Pokesdown Children's Centre.

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<https://www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/south-west-trains-network-rail-make-pokesdown-station-accessible>

<http://www.pokesdowncommunityforum.btck.co.uk/>