

## Consultation response

### About us

Wheels for Wellbeing is an inclusive cycling charity based in south London. We are a grassroots disability organisation, running five sessions a week at our three inclusive cycling hubs. Using any of our fleet of over 200 cycles (handcycles, tandems, tricycles, recumbents, wheelchair cycles, side-by-sides and bicycles) Disabled people of all ages can discover or rediscover cycling, whilst enjoying its health and wellbeing benefits. Every year around 1,200 Disabled people, aged from 18 months to 99 years-old, cycle at our hubs. We are also increasingly recognised as the voice of Disabled cyclists in the UK.

### Disabled cyclists and the rail network

Providing an attractive, whole-journey experience is crucial to encouraging more Disabled people to cycle, who often rely on multiple modes of transport to get around. What's more, Disabled people are more likely to be adversely affected by a lack of integrated transport modes as they already have to go to considerable lengths to plan a journey. However, accessing the rail network is all but impossible for many Disabled cyclists who use their cycle as a mobility aid and who find cycling easier than walking (storing a tricycle on a train, for instance).

According to our latest [survey](#) of Disabled cyclists, of those who use their cycle as a mobility aid 25% said they had been refused from boarding a train, whilst 1 in 10 have been asked to dismount on a train concourse. Furthermore, a recent audit that we conducted found that only one out of twenty-five Train Operating Companies (TOCs) in England and Wales appeared to have a policy permitting the storage of non-standard cycles onboard. This severely limits the type of journey that Disabled cyclists can undertake.

This problem is compounded by the fact that, whilst we know of many Disabled cyclists who have been challenged when attempting to board a train, we also know of some who have successfully managed to do so without any problems - indeed, as this [blog](#) illustrates, some Disabled people have even been able to book assistance with getting their non-standard cycle on board via the Passenger Assist scheme. However, in practice, there remains huge variability and inconsistency in the ways in which different train operators approach this issue, which can cause added anxiety for Disabled cyclists.

## Our recommendations

Therefore, in order for Disabled cyclists to feel confident in completing a journey by cycle that involves rail (and for the Review to achieve its stated outcome of ensuring that the rail network is “*accessible and simple to use...and progress equal access for all its users, including disabled people*”), we have the following recommendations:

1. Where rules exist permitting the storage of wheelchairs and mobility scooters onboard trains, the same rules should apply (where physically and practically possible) to Disabled cyclists who use their cycle as a mobility aid
2. That any information, leaflets or guidance provided by a train operator on the size, weight and types of mobility scooters that may be carried also explicitly outlines its policy on non-standard cycles
3. Disabled cyclists who use their cycle as a mobility aid be exempt from having to dismount on train concourses (our latest survey of Disabled cyclists shows that 1 in 10 have been asked to dismount their cycle on a train concourse, even though they are using it as a mobility aid and despite the fact that for some it might be physically impossible to do so)
4. Where there is scope and it is practically possible for the train operator, scooter permit schemes (like those operated by Great Western Railway) be extended to Disabled cyclists, when using a cycle as a mobility aid
5. Train stations provide adequate facilities for Disabled cyclists, including inclusive cycle parking and cycle hire provision
6. Rail staff to receive mandatory training on the rights and needs of Disabled people as *cyclists*, including the fact that:
  - Many Disabled people find cycling easier than walking, use their cycle as a mobility aid and are physically unable to dismount and walk/wheel their cycle (e.g. when asked to dismount on a train concourse)
  - Many Disabled cyclists use non-standard cycles to get around, which are typically longer, wider and heavier than standard bicycles. Disabled cyclists may therefore not have the option to park their cycle at their departure station or hire another at their destination, and may need to store such a cycle onboard a train as part of an integrated journey involving multiple modes of transport

Wheels for Wellbeing would be happy to participate in any pilots seeking to extend mobility aid permits on trains to Disabled cyclists, and to provide training for train operators on how to meet the needs of Disabled cyclists.