



Residents Against Station Closure

Position Statement

February 2015

Background

Between 2003 and 2006, Sheffield Station and the immediate area was the subject of major redevelopment which included the building of the “Golden Route” into the city, Sheaf Square, The Cutting Edge sculpture and a significant upgrade of the station. The project cost just over £50m and within that was £7.5m to build a new footbridge and lifts.

The project was funded by the Department for Transport, English Partnerships, Objective One, Railway Heritage Trust, Single Regeneration Budget, Strategic Rail Authority and Yorkshire Forward.

At that time the station was managed by Midland Mainline who were key partners in the redevelopment and were keen to ensure that the facilities and in particular the retail outlets, were used by the wider community not just rail passengers.

The footbridge is designed to be an interchange, connecting all forms of transport i.e. Trains, Buses, Trams, Taxis, cars, pedestrians - including disabled access and cyclists. This role in connectivity continues to strengthen and grow. The Bike Hub and Russell’s Bike Shop have been operating in the station since August 2014. Russell’s and EMT jointly, recently won an ATOC national cycle award as Station of the Year for their innovative partnership in developing green transport links and building a new cycle hub .

In 2007 the Railway Heritage Trust awarded the station ‘Overall Winner in the Ian Allan Publishing category, for the impressive ‘make-over’.

Later that year, the Department for Transport awarded the franchise to *Stagecoach* East Midlands Trains and included in the agreement, a *commitment* to install automatic ticket barriers at *certain* stations on the line between St Pancras and Sheffield.

What would barriers mean for access?



The effect of barriers would be to prevent anyone, without a ticket to travel, from crossing the footbridge. This would preclude use by tram passengers, pupils at the local secondary school, College and university students, who live on one side and study on the other side of the station and other local residents who cross the station to go to work, to shop and to socialise in the city. It would also hamper opportunities to shop in the growing retail hub developing in the station. The Tap, an award winning pub which links the wider community directly with Platform One, would have to be changed substantially as this type of connectivity would be precluded by the implementation of a barrier system.

Closure of the route through the station would force pedestrians to resort to the unlit, inaccessible (to buggies and wheelchairs) bridge, 50 meters to the left of the station known locally as the “muggers” bridge”.

2008 Local People organise



Amid widespread disbelief that barriers should be proposed at the station, the campaign to save the route was born as Residents Against Station Closure. During the early months of 2008 hundreds of individuals and scores of major organizations pledged their commitment and petitioned to keep the publicly funded route open. (See Appendix One) Regular protests were held which were well supported by individuals, groups and all local political parties.

September 2009

A working group was convened by the City Council, it comprised representatives of East Midlands Trains and RASC and was chaired by the Senior Councillor responsible for Transport.

Council Officers presented a strong case against closure of the station explaining the crucial role of the footbridge in connectivity and regeneration of the city. Later in the meetings RASC also made a presentation refuting arguments put forward by EMT. The content of both presentations is available to view on the website

www.rasc-sheffield.com



November 2009

East Midlands Trains applied for Planning permission to install barriers. RASC led a campaign to object to the application. There were 1200 signatories against the proposal, many included detailed comments, on the Council website. The application was rejected and there was general rejoicing .EMT said they would appeal or submit another application but so far, have not done so.

14th December 2011

Paul Blomfield MP for Sheffield Central secured an Adjournment Debate with Norman Baker the Minister for Transport about the future of access through Sheffield station. (See Hansard Volume 537 No. 241) As a result the Minister proposed a meeting between the Secretary of

State for Transport, Ms Justine Greening and interested parties from Sheffield.

29th February 2012

A delegation from Sheffield including all MPs, relevant City Councillors and Officers and the Chair and Vice Chair of RASC met with Justine Greening, Norman Baker and Department for Transport officials, at their offices.

The Secretary of State chaired the meeting. She acknowledged the importance of maintaining public access through the station and confirmed that barriers would not be installed before an alternative route was created. She allocated £3million from departmental under-spends to support access but required the Council to accept or refuse the offer within 3 weeks. (See www.rasc-sheffield.com for more detail about the meeting)

To date –February 2015, no alternative route has been built. The station remains free of barriers and open to all.

So Why has RASC remained steadfastly opposed to barriers at this station?

Barriers not only destroy access, they damage the City's regeneration strategy

The footbridge is a well lit and user -friendly route across the station and is highly successful in linking people and places. The annual footfall survey carried out by South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authority on the first Friday in October each year, has recorded a dramatic rise in usage.

In **2000** the number of people using the station daily was **21,407** of these **3.4%** or **764** were “walking through” as opposed to using the rail link.

By October **2014** the numbers had mushroomed to **37,094** using the footbridge of whom **3,242 (8.0%)** people were walking through this direct route to the City Centre.

In addition to the obvious role of facilitating ease of movement across the city, developments at the Station have been and continue to be central to a range of regeneration programmes. These fall into three main categories.

The development of Green Spaces



So far approximately £1.5m has been spent on the development of Sheaf Valley Park (SVP). The Park includes a 1000 seat open air amphitheatre, overlooking the station and providing panoramic views of the City. The bridge provides direct access to the Park and the well lit Steel Steps and ramps which link the transport interchange with Park Hill and Norfolk Park, include a City Arboretum with 238 trees of 42 species.

Sheaf Valley Park is part of a new 1.25 km green corridor created by connecting and transforming several underused, derelict or isolated spaces to form 8 ha of useable open space for the fast growing City Centre population of Sheffield (now 25,000). New woodland ‘ride’ through Clay Woods links Sheffield’s green spaces to the city centre.

Norfolk Park Heritage Trail

The Bridge links the City’s Heritage Trail to the Norfolk Park Heritage trail which includes the historic Cholera Monument Gardens (built 1832) , Norfolk Heritage Park and Manor Lodge (built 1516) one of most important historic buildings in the region. For 14 years The Lodge was one of the homes of Mary Queen of Scots when she was imprisoned on the orders of Elizabeth 1st.

New Homes

When Urban Splash was in negotiation with the city to redevelop Park Hill flats adjacent to the station, their involvement was predicated on the existence of open access through the station to the city centre. They were determined to ensure that this iconic development is firmly connected to the centre of the city. Paths and footways have been built between Park Hill and the station footbridge. New housing is being built on the old site of Sheffield College and the land at Claywood is earmarked for redevelopment.

What next for the station footbridge and for RASC? Re-Franchising of the Sheffield to London railway line.



Many people believe that the battle to save the footbridge has been won. It has not!

The East Midlands Trains franchise was due to end in October 2015, but is to be extended to October 2017, as part of the general re-scheduling of the franchise agreements. There will be a negotiated extension with the existing operator, probably to take place this year.

RASC will monitor the process to watch for any new conditions which DFT might include in the Franchise extension.

We also intend to scrutinise the full tender document which is due to be released late 2015 /early 2016, as it was through the Franchise process that the proposal to install barriers at the station was first introduced to the City.

Electrification and growth of passenger numbers

Other major developments which will have an impact on the maintenance of free access through the station include the Electrification of the line which has been deferred to 2019/20. Electrification requires improved clearances to accommodate overhead power lines and it appears that the present footbridge, and the goods bridge (for servicing retail outlets and trains, not used by the public) would need to be rebuilt. Electrification, coupled with the huge growth in user numbers over the last 10 years and the continuing pressure from the City to keep the station open to the public provides an opportunity for a new bridge to be built which meets everyone's needs. This is something RASC will campaign to achieve.

In summary

RASC will continue to campaign for the maintenance of open access through the station for **all** users.

RASC will also continue to protest against the regular manual ticket checks carried out by East Midlands Trains. These checks are always carried out in such a way that access through the station is blocked, to those without a ticket to travel. The process is often found to be intimidating and it contravenes the promise made by the Minister on 29th February 2012.

East Midlands Trains try to insist that people passing through the station take a “bridge pass” We do not accept their right to make us take a “pass” to walk through our publicly funded route,

It has never been satisfactorily demonstrated that these checks, which block the station to other users, are a necessary, appropriate or effective means of revenue control, nor that ticket barriers installed in a similar fashion, would achieve benefits commensurate with their costs.

When challenged by RASC in June 2014 Neil Micklethwaite Customer Service & Commercial Director , East Midlands Trains wrote:

“There is of course no obligation on a non-Rail user to accept the bridge pass”

There is no evidence that the ticket checkers understand or accept this position and RASC frequently receives reports of harassment and intimidation following checks.

RASC continues to fight.

To join us or to keep in touch **Email** rasc2008@live.com

RASC January 2015

Appendix 1

Individuals, groups and organizations opposed to the closure of the footbridge at Sheffield station:

All Sheffield MPs
Clive Betts
Paul Blomfield
David Blunkett
Nick Clegg
Meg Munn
Angela Smith
Chamber of Commerce - Sheffield
Creative Sheffield
English Heritage
Friends of Cholera Monument Grounds and Claywood
Friends of Norfolk Heritage Park
Friends of Sheaf Valley Park
Manor Castle Green Party
Manor and Castle Development Trust
Sheffield Campaign Against Climate Change
Sheffield City Council
Sheffield Green Party
Sheffield Labour Party
Sheffield Liberal Democrats
Sheffield Civic Trust
Sheffield City College
Sheffield Hallam University
Sheffield Hallam University Students Union
Sheffield Pensioners Action Group
Sheffield Taxi Trade Association
Sheffield Transport 4 All
Sheffield Wild Life Trust
Shop mobility
South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.
Urban Splash
Victoria Community Enterprise
Victoria Environment Group
Victoria Methodist Church
We Want Our Buses Back

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