

18 September 2009

Dear Mr Coucher

Re.: New Footbridge at St Neots Railway Station

I have recently been approached by a number of constituents in St Neots regarding the planned footbridge to allow disabled access to all platforms at St Neots railway station.

This is an important issue for the town. As you may appreciate, certain incorrect information that was published by First Capital Connect in an online forum recently, stating that the bridge had been delayed indefinitely, has served to further impress the importance of this project.

However, my office made enquiries and there would seem to be some confusion as First Capital Connect believe that plans have been submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council whereas the Council believe that this is not so, although they have seen a number of options. Could you clarify this for me, please?

I understand from Huntingdonshire District Council that Network Rail is currently someway through what is a rather long and protracted design and procurement process for the bridge. A large sum of money has been made available in order to assist with this aim.

Even though the information on the First Capital Connect website was inaccurate, the current situation is still far from ideal and the need for the bridge is increasing as time moves forward. The rate of building has significantly increased on the Loves Farm development with over 250 properties now occupied and it is expected that number will continue to rise rapidly. I have heard reports of up to 600 properties being occupied in the next year. It is, therefore, most important that the bridge is built as soon as possible. This will not only link the development to the rest of St Neots, but it will also decrease the number of car journeys currently made by commuters.

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The disabled lifts that are to be incorporated into the design of the new bridge are also very important. Currently, disabled people have no option but to travel to Peterborough or Stevenage for fully accessible stations. These are both considerable, time consuming journeys and it is simply not satisfactory to expect residents in the largest town in Cambridgeshire to make such complex travel arrangements, should they wish to travel by rail.

The new bridge will also have great safety benefits for the increasing number of school children that are attending the Round House Primary School on Loves Farm as well as those travelling in the opposite direction to attend Longsands College.

As I am sure you will appreciate, local people now wish to know that the new footbridge, which they were promised, will be built sooner rather than later. I would, therefore, be very grateful if you would be able to consider these representations as a matter of urgency and provide me with a clear timescale by which this project will commence.

I am happy meet with you to discuss this matter in person, should you wish to do so, either in Westminster or the Huntingdon constituency.

Yours sincerely



cc. All St Neots County Councillors
All St Neots District Councillors
St Neots Town Council
Mrs Christine Tuff, Head Teacher, The Round House Primary School
Ms Julia Holmes, New Community Development Officer, Bedford Pilgrims Housing Association
Mr John Delaney, Chairman, St Neots Town Football Club

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