

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2004

## ROADS WINS LANDMARK CASE AGAINST TRAINS

Train operating companies were today issued with a stark legal warning about making stations accessible to disabled people, following an appeal court judgement.

The landmark judgement follows a case taken by Keith Roads against Central Trains under the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1999 duties.

Mr Roads, a disabled man from Norfolk, was supported by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC), and comes away with £1,097 damages.

Judge Sedley, QC, in the Royal Courts of Justice in central London, ruled today that train operators Central Trains acted unlawfully by not paying the cost of Keith's cab fare to drive him to the other side of the station.

Mr Roads' case in the Court of Appeal stems from the problems faced by people with mobility impairments at Thetford Station. Only one platform, travelling from Norwich to Thetford, allows you direct access to the main station or town centre. When travelling to Norwich direct access to the required platform is not possible. This platform has no access to the main station or town centre. The only way to access the town centre is via a half-mile journey around to the front of the station. And this route is fraught with danger for wheelchair-users as Keith Roads explains:

"I am delighted that, at last, something is going to be done about the lack of access at Thetford Station. The half-mile journey wheelchair-users are forced to make is extremely perilous, consisting of potholes, steep hills, a narrow bridge, unpaved roads with two-way traffic and a muddy dirt-track. I would be taking my life into my own hands undertaking a journey like that."

Agnes Fletcher, Assistant Director, Communications at the DRC said:

"The DRC is very pleased that justice has been done in Keith Roads' long-running battle with Central Trains. This is a wakeup call to all train operating companies. It has been important for the DRC to support Keith's efforts as his case falls squarely within the DDA. We hope that this judgement will mean that the hundred or so other stations where this sort of access issue causes problems for disabled people will now seek to mend their ways."

"Keith's experiences typify the appalling level of service that disabled people endure every day when trying to use transport. According to interim research by Tripscope some 60 per cent of stations in Britain are simply not accessible to disabled people."

Rather than risk life and limb on the perilous half-mile journey, Keith Roads has, in the past, used the only alternative and paid in the region of £45 for an accessible

cab from Norwich to drive him to the other side of the station. This is because there are no accessible taxis available in Thetford.