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CHRONICLE

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MICHAEL ROMYN

NEGLECTED STATION IS SET FOR REVAMP

After years of neglect Tunbridge Wells station is in line for a series of improvements to enhance its appearance and accessibility, which are set to make it the "benchmark for all other stations".

New window frames, restored platform canopies and replacement anti-pigeon netting are due to be installed by the end of the year. And survey work for the creation of a lift to platform two, which will provide easier access for disabled passengers and parents with pushchairs, is currently under way.

Tunbridge Wells MP Greg Clark said the works would make it a station for "all other stations in the Southeastern region to be judged against".

A raft of improvements have already taken place, including a renovated footbridge, the addition of a help point at the disabled access gate, new ticket office windows and a resurfaced pavement outside the station on Mount Pleasant Road.

The station's historic clock has also been restored, complete with chimes not heard for a generation.

Mr Clark added: *"Two years ago Tunbridge Wells station looked a real mess. The footbridge was covered in rust and the clock more often stopped than showed the right time. I have been campaigning for the last two years for these improvements and I am delighted that Tunbridge Wells will soon be setting the standard for all other stations to follow."*

The works are all being undertaken as part of a joint project between Southeastern and Network Rail.

Mr Clark met with Southeastern managing director Charles Horton to present the station with a coveted national standard for safety and security.

Tunbridge Wells received the Secure Station award for bringing in measures to reduce anti-social behaviour, cut crime and improve passenger safety.

Mr Horton said: *"This is another significant step, both for Southeastern and our passengers. Safety and security remain our highest priorities."*

Mr Clark added: *"The award is another important step forward and a reflection of the commitment of station staff. Tunbridge Wells station is the gateway to our town for many visitors, as well as the place where many commuters begin and end their day. I believe it should be an attractive, welcoming place, that lives up to the beauty of our historic environment. This much-needed upgrade will make a huge difference. I would also like to see flowers and hanging baskets to reflect the greenness of the town. This is a great start and I am determined we should have a station of which the whole town can be proud."*

Network Rail has also confirmed the station is one of 150 across the country that stands to benefit from Government funding worth £150m.

The money was set aside to improve medium-sized stations as part of the National Station Improvement Programme to run between 2009 and 2014.