
Minutes of the Leeds Bradford Airport[®] Accessibility Group Forum held at

Britannia Hotel, Leeds Road, Bramhope, Leeds LS16 9JJ.

Wednesday 1ST May, 10:00-13:00 hours.

Attendees

Kay Atkin	Chairperson	KA
Leesh Dusauzay	Sparkle Sheffield	LD
Bairbre McKendrick	Leeds City Council	BM
Miriam Watson-Pratt	Little hiccups	MW
Kim O'Connor	Leeds Diocese pilgrimage to Lourdes	KO
Catherine Greenwood	Otley action for older people	CG
Dan King	PRM Manager, LBA [®]	DK
Andy Leat	Customer Operations Manager, LBA [®]	AL
Ann-Marie Pearson	Customer Experience Development Manager, LBA [®]	AMP
Chris Wilkinson	Head of Customer Operations, LBA [®]	CW
Erica West-Padgett	Therapy Dogs	EW
Nigel Thompson	Disability Action, Yorkshire	NT
Pat Kilbane	Soroptimist International, Yorkshire	PK
Judith Parson	Soroptimist International, Yorkshire	JP
Zena Finlay	SOS Group	ZF

Connected by video stream (4G mobile)

Emily Kilby	Civil Aviation Authority
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Apologies

Chris Bright	JDRF
Michael Connolly	Skywise Solutions Ltd
Everita Strelca	Skywise Solutions Ltd
Michael Jowett	LBA® Customer
Rachel Hirst	William Merritt Disabled Living Centre
David Blythe	William Merritt Disabled Living Centre
Aniqa Mirza	William Merritt Disabled Living Centre
Phil Chan	Leeds City Council & NHS Leeds
Rachel Adam-Smith	LBA® Customer
Ella Baxter	AVSED

1. Introduction, Welcome & Apologies

The meeting was opened by DK and KA was introduced as the new chair to the group. New members were welcomed to the group and each member in attendance was asked to introduce themselves and provided information regarding the organisation represented or background for participation in the forum. Emily Kilby was also welcomed to the meeting attending remotely via video call. It was explained to the attendees that EK is currently undertaking a project with the CAA around airport accessibility meetings.

Some of the group had attended airport tours since the last meeting which they expressed were insightful and very useful.

2. Previous Minutes review

Previous minutes were reviewed, no issues raised.

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3. Quality Standards

Explanation was provided to the attendees about the ECAC code and service standards. This was broken down into departing customers, arriving customers and transit customer. Transit passengers are low in numbers at LBA compared to larger airport. Usually, passengers arriving from Ireland to then continue to Europe are the only transit passengers.

DK explained how the standards are measured in practice. QR codes are provided for passenger feedback surveys. There is also an in-house LBA customer service team who received feedback from the CAA Surveys but also correlate any direct feedback.

It was noted that there have been particular challenges recently with the security upgrade. Half of security is now using the new scanners, however capacity through security is reduced whilst the other half of the area is upgraded.

Members of the group raised concerns around potential confusion for passengers with some scanners not requiring removal of liquids and items, yet others still do. Also different airports now have different rules depending on what scanners are in use.

The assistance team have regular meetings with security team to ensure that they can address issues and ensure passenger flow is impacted as little as possible. The assistance team is also aware and preparing for similar issues over this next period due to the terminal upgrade.

The arrivals process was noted as the other area of difficulty. The arrivals process is being reviewed and there has been progress made with border force to initiate a pop-up border at peak times on the ground floor to allow level access arrivals, removing the small lift issue which creates a bottle neck currently. This would be an interim measure until the terminal upgrade is completed.

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4. Performance Review

Passenger numbers have increased significantly from 2022-2023 to 2023-2024 seasons.

As mentioned earlier arrivals have proven challenging and there were times between April and September 2023 that the 80% target was not reached for assistance within 20 minutes of arrival. Hopefully the changes being put in place for the arrivals process will improve this area of assistance.

In 2022-2023 one passenger missed their flight. In this instance the passenger had been taken to the gate, but this gate was subsequently changed and by the time the passenger had been taken to the new gate the flight had departed. A new flight was arranged for later that day.

In 2023-2024 seven customers missed flights, this was linked to two flights.

Flight 1 – customer had been taken to a café. There had then been a shift change. Assistance hadn't gone to collect the passenger from the café to take them to board prior to the flight departing. A new flight was organised for the passenger.

Flight 2 – affected 6 customers. Passengers were on the ambulift, they were taken out to a plane. Due to a computer system error and plane swop there was issues with identification of the correct plane, ultimately they were at the wrong plane of the two and missed the flight. A replacement flight was organised for later the same day.

In each case the assistance team ensured new flights and onward travel were arranged, costs covered by the airport. A review is then carried out to look at what has happened and how this can be prevented in future. LBA prides itself on transparency and learning from any issues which have occurred.

During the 2023/2024 season there were 55,321 pre notified assistance passengers, with a further 16,608 non notified assistance passengers. All passengers will be helped regardless but the challenges with meeting all assistance needs if large numbers of non-notified passengers arrived were discussed due to ensuring staffing is available in the correct areas and the correct amount of support.

Assistance requests continue to increase and a prediction of a further 20-25% increase over the next season is expected.

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NT raised a question to how the assistance team plans to meet the increase number of assistance requests in order to deliver the required level of service.

DK replied that LBA retain their core team of staff. They avoid seasonal or short-term contracts meaning they have a permanent team of well trained staff. All the team members undergo the Skywise training. The equipment has been increased so with the new ambulifts capacity has increased for getting passenger on and off flights. The CEO of the airport is listening to feedback and supportive of the service. Maintaining links with the accessibility forum is also key to ensure gaining feedback and consultation into how things are running and what can be improved.

Assisted travel feedback, this is collected via survey. The CAA survey is separated but any free text comments are sent through and collated by the LBA customer service team. There was a higher level of complaints in sap/oct which is often when assistance is busier. Overall compliments remained higher than complaints throughout the entire year.

Toilet facilities often featured within the feedback. This is being addressed with the terminal redesign, ensuring space and locations are more appropriate.

It is also positive to get a high level of named feedback allowing it to be passed back to the staff.

5. Projects & Customer Experience Journey

New ambulift discussed at last forum have now been delivered. This was an investment of £360,000. Both ambulifts have been fitted with a swivel nose to help with the connection to the aircraft.

There is now a fleet of 6 ambulifts. The oldest vehicle is due to be retired at the end of the summer season. Two others are due to be sent for interior refurbishment this year.

A further ambulift has been ordered to replace the vehicle due to be retired. This will be delivered early 2025.

A new stair climber is due for delivery this month. This will assist with the smaller twin propeller planes used for regional flights, as they cannot be accessed via the ambulift. Air Lingus has increased the flights with four to Belfast and four to Dublin. The stair climber is able to assist take a passenger up the fold down stairs onto the plane and to their seat. There is already one stair climber in use at the airport but due to the flight timings and now increased flights a second is required to meet demand.

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Security upgrades have made an impact to the processing of passengers. With the new technology an increase from 600 to 1600 passengers can be achieved. The full upgrade should be completed in around a month's time. Both the body scanners and luggage scanners have been upgraded. Liquids and electronics no longer have to be removed from hand baggage. The body scanners are more open and do not require an arms up position.

Positive feedback was received around the new body scanners as they no longer require arms to be lifted and are also suitable for those with medical implants. Although belts do have to be removed so this was raised as a dignity issue given the arm position required for the scan as you would be unable to hold up the trousers potentially leading to them to fall down.

PK/JK raised a concern in regard to people trafficking and how the changes may impact. Placing a metal spoon in a bra has been a way of alerting security to requiring help so there was a concern that the new scanners may prevent methods of discreetly alerting staff. This will be raised with the security lead to ensure it has been considered.

Parking update provided by AL:

Meet and Greet car park has increased to 120 cars.

This is a good car park for accessibility.

Fully resurfaced, intercom and has marked accessible bays.

There is a safe pedestrian route to the terminal.

The car is then returned to outside the terminal for your arrival back. The team are working on getting an accessible bay at this area as well. Staff are on hand to assist in anyway required with this car park service.

Premium Short Stay

Recently resurfaced and accessible bays marked out.

Immediately in front of terminal

Generally the bays in this car park are larger.

All car park equipment has been updated with call points and intercom in all car parks.

Accessible car parking spots are not able to be pre-booked. Pre-booking allows a space in the car park and reduced rate, however it is not possible to reserve a specific spot due to on the day arrivals.

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The group asked if there would be consideration to having a pre-booked only car park to allow pre-booked accessible space to assist with reducing anxiety around parking. Currently all car parks are mixed pre-book and arrive on day. Not aware of a way that could do specific space reservations with the current set up.

Bus:

One new bus and two further on order.

Had followed Gatwick's example and changed to single door buses however this is not working at LBA so new buses are going to be back to the two door buses.

All are accessible with ramps and wheelchair spaces. All drivers are trained on accessibility and able to assist passengers.

Each bus stop also has a call point.

Disabled Drop Off:

When a blue badge holder is travelling the drop off area is extended to 60 minutes for £6.50 rather than the 10 minutes. This will allow the person dropping off to assist the person as needed and handover to assistance team.

When free drop off was available this was abused and the feedback was 10 minutes didn't allow enough time, so allowing an extended time for drop off without any increased fee to standard drop off was introduced.

Journey to Net Zero:

DK updated about the switch from diesel to electric vehicles as part of the move towards Net Zero.

Did look at electric ambulift however the two new ones are diesel.

Newcastle have purchased an electric ambulift but it requires a charge after completing 15 connections, which takes 4 hours. At LBA 15 connections can occur in an hour, with the vehicle then out of service for 4 hours meaning it is not a viable option at the current time.

Training Room:

MP updated that a new training room is getting created to allow training of assistance staff to occur in a mock up aircraft. This will improve the staff learning experience with training experiencing the same space restrictions as occur in real life scenarios.

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6. Open Forum

Website:

BM noted that the website has differing terminology on different pages, this needs checking and updating to ensure is correct and using appropriate terminology. AL/DK to check through all pages and links.

Colostomy Shelves:

BM raised a request to consider the introduction of the colostomy shelves within accessible toilets.

Also consider the amount of clutter that can be in accessible toilets which is not needed.

Often too many bins when a single bin type may be suitable for all waste types.

Chair requested support group details shared to send an invite to the forum. DK advised that there had previously been links with a Stoma group as work had been carried out around security processes.

Therapy Dogs:

EW raised that pre covid, Jarvis the therapy dog had started coming to the airport to escort families through the airport. There was very positive feedback to the service. Would be keen to reintroduce the service. Original plan had been to increase knowledge of service via website, and to increase number of dogs available. DK to look at the process to get a new trial underway. Would be great to have in place by school summer holidays.

Toilet safeguarding Signage –PK/JP raised request for Information poster on how to get help. LBA is a forced marriage area. Risk of people trafficking. Can be beneficial having information on how to get assistance displayed. Showed picture of Manchester Airport poster but felt was too cluttered so key message may get lost. PK & JP to speak with safeguard lead at their organisation and feedback wordings to DK. Can then be displayed within toilets. DK confirmed the Skywise training includes safeguarding which does cover industry specific aspects such as trafficking. AL also fed back that behind the scenes within different areas of airport there is work going on to target any of these activities, police are based just after security and there are links between border force, police and security.

Employment of disabled people:

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NT requested information around what the policy is on employment of disabled people and if there was a contact he could pass on to his team. DK confirmed LBA has a number of disabled employees in different areas of the business with different types and levels of disability. DK will send over contact details for appropriate person following the meeting.

Parkway Train Station:

BM asked if the airport had any updates regarding the parkway train station. CW reported from a recent meeting that this is still planned. The plan will be a free shuttle from the station to the airport once built. Likely at least 7-8 years away still.

Bus Link:

BM asked if any feedback had been received by the airport since the relocation of the flying tiger in the town centre. Following interchange being altered the stop appears more difficult to access. The airport report not having had any specific feedback about the bus links.

Previously the airport have had some involvement in transport links. DK attending a department of transport initiative in 2016/2017 which was based around joined up transport. Currently Charles Johnson is the person within the airport who links with the wider transport network. NT suggested increasing representation to the forum to ensure a wider area of Yorkshire is covered given LBA is main airport. DK/AL advised the airport have a good relationship with Transdev who provide the bus service, this allows them to keep them updated on ways to access assistance at the airport.

7. X25 Update

CW updated that work continues on the multi-million investment. There will be three phases to the plan, and we will expect to see a new departure lounge, new arrivals hall and general improvements around the whole site. Currently 364 days to go until live. Presently is a construction site, but aim will be to start building fit out around January 2025. It is hoped that a building tour will be arranged with members of the accessibility group in the autumn as part of the ongoing consultation for the development.

There will be passenger journey and experience testing throughout each stage and the accessibility forum will be part of this.

Following the extension there will be around another 2.5 year refurbishment of the existing buildings. In total expected 3 years of construction/refurbishment.

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KA asked if there had been confirmation regarding the lift size after security on departures as this was unknown at the time of planner meetings. CW advised that due to space and cost restraints the lifts are smaller than hoped. They will take 2 wheelchairs and assistance. Although not ideal they have run forecasting and passenger flows so don't feel it will be an issue.

CW advised the aim of the build is to allow every passenger to experience the full passenger journey and be able to access all areas.

Currently there is one air bridge in use at the airport, a second will be installed this year. As new terminal opens two air bridges will be in use.

Customers can already see the investment being made in the airport. Although there are some disappointments with the design the improvements will elevate the existing experience. Fixtures and fittings are not confirmed yet however comments made at previous meetings have been noted. Will also look to consult with members of the group nearer the time to get input.

The group voiced being happy to have the opportunity to input into the project. Some members asked if there is a way for others to feedback into the project that may currently not be aware. A link is provided below with project details and contacts.

More information is online at

<https://www.leedsbradfordairport.co.uk/regen>

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8. Q&A

Has any progress been made regarding video clips as discussed at previous meetings?
Working with sparkle Sheffield to look at video clips. Have been allocated some time with marketing to enable production of these.

How do people get to attend the forum?

Accessibility forum stated in 2016, initially invites were sent to groups/organisations in Leeds to attend. At that time the meetings were limited to 20 people due to room size restraints. Now meetings are held off site there is greater scope for attendance. Will look to try and increase the groups and individuals who can feed into the meeting. With customers tend to try and rotate the customers that attend the forum to capture different views.

Tour and engagement events can be arranged. Always better in the winter months when airport is quieter.

Also happy to arrange 1:1 catch ups to cover specific issues or areas to work on.

Meeting was closed by KA