

Minutes: Liverpool Airport Accessibility Committee (L.A.A.C.) Forum

Wednesday 03 May 2023 11:00

Attendees			
Name	Company	Name	Company
Andy Wright	Chair, L.A.A.C.	Paul Staples	Director of Airport Operations, LPL
Debbie Lacy-May	Head of Terminal Operations, LPL	Christina Smith	Customer Services Executive, LPL
Alex Henshaw	Operations Manager, ABM, LPL	Leanne McLaughlin	Operations Manager, EasyJet
Helen Gillan	NHS Southport	Sarah Oldnall	The Brain Charity
Kelly Barton	Thomas Pocklington Trust	Mick Spriggs	Thomas Pocklington Trust
Abhi Chacko	Ostrum (creator Purple Door App)		
Apologies			
Julie Simpson	Autism Adventures	Pat Broster	Thred CIC
Stephen Cronin	Spinal Injuries Association	Nigel + Hazel Morley	IAS Support

Welcome and Terminal Inspection

Andy welcomed the Forum members to the Liverpool Airport Accessibility Committee Forum, followed by brief introductions from each, including two new guests from the Thomas Pocklington Trust.

Paul then provided a brief overview of the airport's performance since the group last came together. Which included highlighting how the airport had welcomed over 5 million passengers in 2019, before the Covid pandemic, when things understandably radically changed. But he felt a full recovery was expected within two years and already in 2022 Liverpool Airport had seen over 70% of pre-pandemic numbers returning to the airport, with 4.7 million passengers anticipated during 2023. Explaining that this was largely in line with the recovery rate experienced by most UK airports so far.

Paul then advised the Forum that Lufthansa had just celebrated its one-year anniversary at the airport. With Icelandic carrier Play now providing a twice weekly flight to Reykjavik and from September 2023 there will be low-cost connections available to New York, Boston, Washington, and Toronto from Liverpool Airport.

Paul was also happy to share that the airport had been voted as one of the best UK airports for its on-time performance during 2022, with average security waiting times during June, July, and August being no worse than 12 minutes. As well as best UK airport in the Which? Airport Survey and a Which? Recommended Provider. It had also been agreed for a further £2 million to be invested into ongoing improvements to many of the new retail developments and a 'Meet and Greet' parking facility. All with a view to improving the PRM Customer Experience at Liverpool Airport.

Paul concluded his presentation by discussing details of some of the new technology that had now been adopted by the airport. Which included 'Cast Capacity Analysis' which assists with future planning and helps to fulfil passenger desires and needs.

'Happy or Not' terminals had now returned to the airport which provide real time customer feedback. Additional Customer feedback channels, such as email, social media, and native messaging will shortly see the addition of Jude the chatbot. The aim of the chatbot is to reduce customer response times to frequently asked questions, such as lost property enquiries. With a phased development in time that will include real time flight departure and arrival data. He explained that this was not intended to replace the option to contact the airport directly but will assist with general information and guidance. Finally, Aerocloud Optic had now also been introduced to Liverpool Airport, which will allow the airport to measure passenger dwell time and behaviour more effectively and will help the airport to support planning with future growth.

(Further information can be found within LAAF Presentation attached).

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Assisted Travel update by ABM

Alex, ABM, started his presentation with a brief overview of ABM's regulatory compliance measured against the Civil Aviation Authority's standards over the last six months. Followed by an update on some existing and new Health and Safety initiatives. Then highlighting a selection of recent passenger feedback, both good and bad, from which learnings could be taken on how to enhance and improve current processes and procedures. As well as some of the Assistance agents' behaviour. He finished by discussing the challenges in the months ahead for ABM, with forecasting passenger number expectations for 2023. Especially given the unexpected rapid return by passengers to aviation following Covid, in 2022. This also included completing staff recruitment and training in preparation for the busy months ahead.

Alex then shared details of a new staff training initiative that had recently been introduced, designed specifically to support passengers arriving at Liverpool Airport from the Isle of Man on hospital flights, which had already proved to be successful. **(Further details within ABM Presentation attached).**

Innovations update

Abhi Chacko, from a technology company called Ostrum, then joined the Forum via Microsoft Teams. Where he introduced a new PRM Accessibility App called Purple Door. Explaining how the App was designed to further support PRM passengers wishing to share more information about themselves, their condition, and their needs and requirements, directly with the airport. So as to ensure the airport staff were as best prepared as possible, to support them when they arrived.

Overall, the Forum members were impressed with the presentation and felt that the App could be very useful to a number of disabled travellers once it is launched.

Thereafter a broader discussion took place amongst the Forum members, about the benefits of such Passenger Assistance Apps. Including what they should offer and how they could best serve the many varying needs and requirements of the disabled traveller.

Kelly offered to link up with Purple Door as part of the App testing process, especially in support of blind and visually impaired travellers. **Andy** said he would connect **Kelly** and **Abhi** directly via email after the meeting.

The members then went on to discuss the concept of Airport Journey 'walk-through' videos. Discussing the possible benefits of creating such videos. Which could be displayed on the airport's website, in order for PRM travellers to better understand the journey ahead before arriving at the airport. Forum members said they would be happy to be involved in the creation of such a video in conjunction with the airport.

Finally, the Forum members then has an open discussion about trying to find ways to encourage the many disabled people who would like to fly, but don't necessarily have the self-confidence to do so.

Nigel and **Hazel** from IAS (Ostomy support charity) had asked this question of their members prior to the meeting, the answers to which they shared with Andy by email. These included getting emergency ostomy supplies abroad and eating concerns around allergies. As it was felt many countries overseas are not as diligent as the UK when it comes to providing ingredient information in support of allergies and intolerances.

It was also felt by the group that many disabled travellers were not necessarily worried about flying itself, but what could happen to them if they were to become unwell overseas. All of which added to their anxiety levels.

A.O.B.

There were no further questions from Forum members. So, the meeting closed with **Christina** and **Andy** thanking all the members for their continued support, saying that Andy would be in touch with the date for the next meeting in due course.

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