

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

Tuesday 01 November 2022 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
Paul Hitchmough	ThredCIC	Nigel + Hazel Morley	IAS Support
Helen Gillan	NHS Southport	Sarah Oldnall	The Brain Charity
Julie Simpson	Autism Adventures	Stephen Joiner	Guide Dogs
George Porter & Dae Lovell - FOLA (Friends of Liverpool Airport)			
Apologies			
Emma Hotchkiss	RNID	Pat Broster	ThredCIC
Stephen Cronin	Spinal Injuries Association	Carrie-Ann Lightley	AccessAble

### Welcome and Terminal Inspection

**Andy** welcomed the Forum members to the Liverpool Airport Accessibility Committee Forum, which initially started in the Cavern Suite at the airport, before the members were escorted on a familiarisation visit of the terminal by **Christina** and members of the FOLA Team. The purpose, which was proposed at the last Forum meeting, was to highlight some changes that had been made within the Departure lounge during the Covid period. As well as act as 'Mystery shoppers' to experience the Security process, in order to feedback comments and observations made.

The tour started at the **Assisted Travel Welcome desk**, directly opposite the check-in desks, where the signage and layout were observed. It was noted that currently, the desk receives and manages many general enquiries and not just those associated with *Assistance* travel. Which could be detrimental during busy periods and affect the quality of service being delivered to those in need of *additional assistance*, when they need support to travel through the airport and onto the aircraft. It was therefore proposed by a number of Forum members that work should be done to improve signage, perhaps with the use of pictogram imagery, in order to clarify the intended purpose of the desk.

**Christina** also mentioned that additional seating is going to be added to the area shortly, in preparation for next summer.

Then proceeding to **Check-in**, it was felt that signage here could also be improved to enable wheelchair users in particular, to be able to view from afar whether an airline had a specific 'Special Assistance' check-in desk or not. Which again could be supported with a simple wheelchair logo placed above or adjacent to the gate number. There were hearing loops located at EasyJet's and Ryanair main check in zones, which were portable. But it was suggested that the loop on the EasyJet desk should primarily be located on the airline's Special Assistance desk, as well as on the Assisted Travel Welcome desk.

#### Journey from Check-in to Security.

On this part of the airport tour the lifts, stairs & escalator were reviewed. Where it was noted by **Stephen** that there was a lack of colour contrasting edging strips on both the steps and escalators. To support visually impaired travellers, or possibly those with dementia. In addition, current signage within this area was conflicting and causing confusion with wayfinding. Also, it was felt that more informative signs or pictograms could be added within lifts i.e., Arrivals or Departures levels in order to avoid or reduce passenger confusion.

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## Terminal Inspection continued...

The tour then prepared to enter **Security**. Initially there was some confusion with deciding which lane the group should enter, as there was no clear directional signage, which was highlighted. **Christina** did point out that in busier times there would be more staff guiding and directing passengers through their Security journey. Nevertheless, suggestions were made by a number of Forum members about various ways in which improvements and enhancements could still be made to this process with the introduction of better signage and 'How to prepare' guidance notices.

Other observations included introducing hand luggage Tray inserts with bold pictograms in order to assist passengers with poor vision. It was also noted that the noise levels within the Security area, considering it was not too busy at that time, were high. Which meant it could be difficult to hear instructions and guidance being relayed by Security personnel.

**Phil** mentioned that passengers with dementia may find it easier to follow pathway directional signage, such as sticky tape or painted lines on the floor, as many travellers with dementia naturally focus downwards.

But overall, it was felt that the staff were mostly very professional and friendly. Although **Andy** did express some caution regarding certain staff members that did appear too friendly or overfamiliar. Which may be misinterpreted or not appreciated potentially by some PRMs.

As the tour was led away from the Security area into a 'Decompression Zone', it was felt that the addition of some additional seating in that area would no doubt benefit some passengers. Especially if they had had to queue for some time during busy periods. At this point, **Tony Pink**, the Security trainer, met with the group to receive feedback and answer questions from the members.

**Nigel** and **Julie** said they would be happy to provide some useful guidance and tips from their respective charities and service users, in order to support ongoing staff training. Which could also be shared and incorporated into the airport's existing disability awareness training modules.

Prior to entering **Duty-Free**, a large Wayfinding Map, which was well placed on an adjacent wall, was noted and commented on by a number of Forum members. Who felt it helped them to clearly plan where they wished to visit in advance, as well as identify accessible toilets etc. However, it was also felt that the area would benefit from either larger flight information display screens or some that were placed at a lower level, mainly for the benefit of wheelchair users.

When passing through **Duty-Free**, it was noted by **Paul H** that the flooring & lighting could be *challenging* for some. Due to the bright lights and sparkly reflective floor surfaces in this area. Not to mention the very strong aromas in and around the perfume and aftershave section. Especially challenging for those who are sensitive to strong scents.

On entering the **Departure lounge** it was noted that a number of the directional toilet signs did not include a wheelchair logo to represent the inclusion of an accessible toilet. Even though all the toilet blocks within the lounge did actually have an accessible toilet. There was a designated 'Assisted travel' seating area in a central location within the lounge, although it was not widely used. Probably because of the compact size of the Departure lounge, which nicely facilitated easy access to the various retail and food outlets within.

The airport tour concluded visiting the **Changing Place facility**, which was very well appointed and spacious. Small enhancements were proposed, which included the addition of hooks for bags or coats and some more appropriately located shelving.

The Forum members then returned to the meeting room for refreshments and a comfort break. During which time **Andy** asked for additional feedback and any other observations relating to the airport infrastructure in general.

**Sarah** mentioned the apparently high speedbumps at the entrance to Express 'Drop Off', which she felt could cause damage to specially adapted wheelchair vehicles.

**Debbie** said they had been assessed and were industry standard. Also, traffic entering this area had now been slowed down to 5 miles an hour as an added safety precaution. But she would liaise directly with Car Parks in order to review the position.

**Stephen** also talked about a number of practical cost-effective measures to help create better colour contrast in and around the entrance areas to the airport. Such as adding yellow lines around concrete safety bollards, to aid visually impaired travellers.

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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 included making sure that sufficient staff were now recruited and trained appropriately, in time for next year's busy summer period. And that every effort was now being made to work better with airlines to improve prenotification and ensure improved internal communication processes were adopted, both with the airport's airlines and their ground handling agents.

### EasyJet presentation

**Leanne**, EasyJet, provided a brief overview of the airline's performance in recent months. She explained how the airline's passenger feedback included PRM satisfaction rates measured in a number of categories across all the UK airports EasyJet operates from. Therefore, **Leanne** was pleased to share that Liverpool had been rated by EasyJet's passengers as their top performing airport. She concluded, by discussing the airline's growth plans for 2023. As well as highlighting some new initiatives which will focus heavily on passenger satisfaction for next year and the recent employment of a new Customer Services Director, who would like to introduce an Accessibility Strategy into the airline during 2023.

### Airport and Security update

**Debbie** started by updating the Forum on the performance of Security during the summer and the current staffing levels and future recruitment plans. **Debbie** then continued discussing new plans to introduce the latest CTX technology into airport Security by May 2023. Which will have a major impact on waiting times when negotiating airport Security, as passengers will no longer be required to separate liquids in advance or be restricted to the existing volumes, they can carry in their hand luggage.

**Paul S** continued by providing further details of the airport's recent recovery rate and forecast for Winter 2022/23, which was encouraging and in line with forecasts. He was also pleased to announce that the customer satisfaction measuring systems, the 'Happy or Not' terminals, had recently been reintroduced into the airport and were currently receiving around 7,000 hits per month. Feedback results were trending at an average of 81% positive currently, which was pleasing. And when a machine was receiving a number of negative alerts, this would trigger attention to that area in order to resolve issues as they happen.

**Paul S** then informed the Forum that Liverpool Airport had recently been ranked third in the UK by OAG, behind Belfast City and East Midlands Airports. As well as being placed joint 1<sup>st</sup> with Exeter, as the UK's 'Best airport' by Which.

He concluded, by saying the airport was looking forward to the Eurovision preparations in May 2023, which will be beneficial both to the city region and the airport. As well as the Golf Open which will be hosted in July next year.

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**Christina** - shared with the Forum members 2 new initiatives that the airport had recently introduced. The first being an AOA Medical Device Card, which is particularly useful for passengers who are ostomates, use insulin pumps or possibly wear CGM monitors. Secondly the '*self-mobilisation*' card, designed for those passengers who wish to self-mobilise through the airport but may require assistance only when they are boarding the aircraft.

**Christina** also made reference to some new airport signage designs that were being considered, a sample of which she would be happy to share following the meeting.

The meeting closed with **Christina** and **Andy** thanking all the forum members for their continued support. Saying the airport would like to host the next forum at the airport during **April 2023** (exact date TBA).

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