**Accessibility Forum Minutes**

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| **Date** | **Tuesday 25th October 2022** |
| **Location** | **via Zoom** |

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| **Attendees** | |
| **Name** | **Company** |
| **Una McKeown** | **Belfast International Airport** |
| **Niall McElkearney** | **Belfast International Airport** |
| **Deborah Harris** | **Belfast International Airport** |
| **Michelle Kelly** | **The Consumer Council** |
| **Hannah Brown** | **The Consumer Council** |
| **Dubheasa McGrinder** | **Alzheimer’s Society** |
| **Kiely Lawlor** | **Autism NI** |
| **Jackson Minford** | **IMTAC** |
| **Allison Minford** | **IMTAC** |
| **Jean Dunlop** | **IMTAC** |
| **Apologies** | |
| **Hannah Lyons** | **Guide Dogs NI** |
| **Sharon McClure** | **RNIB** |
| **Elaine Manson** | **RNIB** |

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| **1-Introductions** |
| Forum members all introduced themselves and the organisation they were representing. |
| **2-Airport Operational Update** |
| BIA outlined recent operational developments. Like all airports recruiting staff was challenging, however airport has full complement of security staff. Swissport was having difficulties recruiting PRM staff, however this had not impacted on the service operated by the airport.  It was noted that there was a significant increase in passengers presenting with a disability; however this has not impacted service and no passenger would ever be challenged as to the nature of their disability.  Renovations had begun to install updated security scanners and further work would continue early next year which would result in a new arrivals hall.  Ryanair will start to fly from the airport from March 2023; and would mean passenger levels are expected to be at pre-Covid levels. |
| **3- Special Assistance Update** |
| PRM targets are being met and exceed by the airport. During May, July and August the airport was the top performing UK airport based on CAA targets and positive feedback had been received by passengers. Despite staffing issues elsewhere OCS had recruited well.  Internal KPIs on baggage were proving challenging to meet.  In response to a question from a Forum member on how feedback was monitored, it was noted that all PRM passengers were given a card to complete a survey for CAA. The airport was considering ways to increase participation levels in this survey. There was also an opportunity to provide feedback through the BIA website. CAA data was now collected on a monthly basis rather than every 6 months which allowed the airport to more immediately identify issues.  The Forum discussed the need to manage expectations of PRM passengers. The airport noted that CAA regulations are primarily around times and movement of passengers from A to B and the aim was to create as “normal” an experience as possible for all passengers during their time in the airport. |
| **4-Update on Recommendations from the Site Visit** |
| The airport took Forum members through a detailed update on their response to the recommendations provided in the report of the site visit in March 2022. This is provided in Appendix 1.  Forum members praised the actions taken following the report and the airport’s proactive approach to improving accessibility measures. Further input will be provided into items which will be progressed in the medium/longer term. |
| **5 - Next Steps** |
| The Forum agreed that the next meeting will be a site visit to the airport, date to be arranged for early 2023. |

**Appendix 1 Response to recommendations from site visit**

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|  | **Signage** |
| 1 | Provide additional signage at entry to short stay car park with directions to disabled parking bays. |
|  | Airport is working with suppliers to get additional signage in place. Detailed information now on website. |
| 2 | Make signage clearer around the accessible drop off areas to deter other vehicles from stopping there. |
|  | Airport has arranged for refreshed line painting and blue badge signage in drop off areas. |
| 3 | Increase size of signage to reserved seating in the check-in area. |
|  | Completed. |
| 4 | Provide additional signage e.g. arrows at eye level in toilet corridors. |
|  | Airport has asked supplier to look into this. |
| 5 | Provide signage in check-in area and at earlier points in departures to indicate presence of changing places toilet beside Gate 19. |
|  | OCS advise all passengers using the service of the presence of a Changing Places toilet in the airport. |
| 6 | Provide braille/”not every disability is visible” signage at disabled toilet in check-in area. |
|  | New signage re hidden disabilities on all disabled toilets. Discussions ongoing about adding braille signage. |
| 7 | Make signage indicating priority/special assistance lane larger. |
|  | Completed. |
| 8 | Add signage beside flight departure screen at security indicating that larger screens are available elsewhere in the airport. |
|  | This screen tends not to be used by passengers – larger screens available just around the corner. |
| 9 | Add additional textual “toilet” signage in addition to figures. |
|  | This had not been progressed as the airport is mindful of the international nature of its passengers – however would be kept under review and Forum members to send any examples of best practice from elsewhere. |
| 10 | Provide additional signage in main toilet areas to distinguish cubicles. |
|  | Discussions had taken place as to the best way to progress this; the airport is investigating changing the highest so doors open outwards. |
| 11 | Provide additional signage for hand dryers. |
|  | Completed. |
| 12 | Improve signage on reserved seating area immediately after restaurants e.g. mark in yellow to differentiate. When undertaking refurbishment of PRM seating ensure they are in contrasting colours and so can be defined more easily. |
|  | Refurbishment of PRM seating was underway; larger distinctive signage has been ordered. The airport will share images of the signage with Forum members. |
| 13 | Provide additional directional signage to gates at eye level where possible and/or on floor where this is possible. |
|  | Overall the airport is progressing a policy of significantly less signage across the airport and senior management now approve all signage. Covid signage is now being removed; will be replaced with clear, directional signage for wayfinding only. |
| 14 | Brown/green colouring on signage is problematic for accessibility purposes as it is more difficult to perceive information than other backgrounds e.g. black on yellow. This should be raised with the airport owners. |
|  | Whilst the airport were bound by corporate branding, updated signage was shared with the group which was agreed to be better contrasting and clearer. |
| 15 | Make signage indicating Gate 10 (and similar gates across the airport where applicable) larger. |
|  | This is forming part of the signage rollout and will be made larger. |
| 16 | Review size of flight information screens across the airport and consider increasing. |
|  | Completed. |
| 17 | Provide bigger signage at the entrance to the Changing Places toilet indicating that it has that facility – including text. |
|  | The Forum discussed how best to approach this; as there had been incidences whereby the Changing Places facility had been used by passengers who did not require it. Members agreed that it would be better to leave as is rather than, for example, change to a keypad/coded entry as the aim was to ensure the journey through the airport was as “normal” as possible for all passengers. |
| 18 | Provide braille signage to Changing Places toilet. |
|  | As per recommendation number 6, discussions are ongoing. |
| 19 | Consider replicating signage at toilets at international departures in other toilets across the airport.  As per recommendation 13, signage being replaced with clear, directional signs for wayfinding only. |
| 20 | Increase size of signage in quiet area. |
|  | Seating in the quiet area has been increased and signage size has been increased. Children’s gaming machines have now been removed from the airport meaning overall airport should in addition be quieter. |
| 21 | Highlight the availability of the quiet area elsewhere in the airport and on the airport website. |
|  | Additional signage put in place advising passengers of the quiet area. |
| 22 | Review signage in border control area to ensure it is not over “busy”. |
|  | Completed. |
| 23 | Provide signage at eye level to lift down to baggage reclaim. |
|  | Completed. |
| 24 | Provide additional signage e.g. arrows along the corridor indicating the exact location of the lift. |
|  | Completed. |
|  | **Parking/Drop off areas** |
| 25 | Review the size of disabled parking bays and consider expanding beyond the regulation standard if possible. |
|  | Measurements were reviewed and found to meet the standards set out by the British Parking Association. To expand would mean losing some bays so this would not be progressed. |
| 26 | Ensure that the five stage process for booking car parking is easily accessible on the airport website. |
|  | A refreshed website was launched last month. The five stage process is now clearly set out in the Special Assistance and Parking sections and can also be accessed through the new “Chat Bot” facility. |
| 27 | Provide additional information at pay stations so that passengers know they can avail of special assistance for parking. |
|  | Forum members discussed the best way to approach this as there was a concern that the service could be abused by passengers who did not require special assistance. Members agreed to consider and feed back. |
| 28 | Give consideration to increasing the amount of disabled parking bays in the coach park. |
|  | As the amount of disabled parking bays in the coach park had not presented any issues, this would not be progressed at the present time. It was noted that the nearby car park office were very flexible should any short term issues arise. |
|  | **Toilet Facilities** |
| 29 | Investigate possibility of installing an additional changing places toilet at check in area. |
|  | As the current facility was meeting demand, this would be a longer term aim. |
| 30 | Investigate design of disabled toilet in check in area i.e. could more room be provided for wheelchair users. |
|  | The airport had engaged AccessAble to review the disabled toilets and they were found to meet requirements. However there was now better placing of moveable equipment to ensure maximum room. |
| 31 | Investigate whether push button flush could be replaced with a handle. |
|  | Discussions had taken place on this, handles were originally in place but regularly needed repair so had been replaced with push buttons. Airport will note any continued feed back on this point. |
| 32 | Check configuration of disabled toilet at restaurant area after check-in to ensure there is enough space for wheelchairs. |
|  | See recommendation 30. |
| 33 | Consider installing automatic “toilet protectors” in the disabled toilets to ensure users can easily disinfect the seat. |
|  | This had been investigated but was felt would potentially add clutter to the area. Will discuss with cleaning contractor. |
| 34 | Consider replicating the blue contrasting handles in disabled toilet at international departures in other toilets across the airport. |
|  | These toilets would be gradually replaced with the newer corporate colours as elsewhere in the airport. Forum members agreed to forward best practice on contrasting colours to the Consumer Council who would forward to airport for consideration. |
| 35 | Consider placement of bins in toilet areas across the airport to ensure they are not in the way of users. |
|  | Bins being replaced and repositioned. |
|  | **Escalators/Steps** |
| 36 | Provide yellow paint at top and bottom of all escalators/steps across the airport. |
|  | Completed for steps. Discussions ongoing as to how this can be progressed for escalators. |
|  | **Security area** |
| 37 | Mark out priority queue clearly with one, contrasting colour for the poles and ropes e.g. yellow or blue. |
|  | Completed. |
| 38 | Replace carpeted areas in the private search/interview room and in other areas of the airport with tiled/smooth flooring where possible. |
|  | This will be rolled out as part of the ongoing extension. |
|  | **Flight Information screens** |
| 39 | Review size of flight information screens across the airport and consider increasing. |
|  | In progress and will be fully complete in medium term. Will be twice the size of previous screens and at eye level. Additional large screen in café. |
|  | **Restaurant/car hire services in arrivals hall** |
| 40 | Liaise with third party delivery partners to conduct an accessibility audit of their facilities. |
|  | Airport to liaise with Consumer Council to discuss how to approach this. |
|  | **Quiet Room** |
| 41 | Consider redesign of the Quiet Room as part of the overall renovations, in order to better facilitate wheelchair users. |
|  | Quiet Room will be closed in new year to allow for extension, discussions ongoing as to its future. It has not been widely used by passengers. |
|  | **Pavements outside airport** |
| 42 | Investigate specifications for the use of tactile paving surfaces and upgrade paving accordingly. |
|  | Looking to upgrade as part of airport redesign. |
|  | **Future Airport Expansion** |
| 43 | Liaise with the Airport Accessibility Forum and other groups at the design stage to ensure the new facilities are accessible to all. |
|  | This Forum will be included as part of future discussions on redesign. |