

Minutes: Bristol Airport Accessibility Forum (BRS AF)

Tuesday 25 March 2025 10:30 a.m.

Attendees

Jerry Angrave - Co-Chair & CX consultant	Richard Thomasson - Head of Customer Operations, BRS
Martyn Collings - Operational Support Manager, BRS	Cherie Marchant - People Director, BRS
Rose Baker - People Business Partner, BRS	Richard Tomlinson - Learning & Development, BRS
Verena Fuller - Customer Relations Manager, BRS	James Power - Security Compliance Manager, BRS
Jo Chase - Project Manager (Buildings), BRS	Sam Saunders - Head of Assisted Services, ABM
Chay Kinslow - Senior General Manager ABM - BRS	Juste Bunikyte - Operations Manager, ABM - BRS
Peter Bungay - Guide Dogs for the Blind	Gordon Richardson MBE - Chair Polio Fellowship, BRS
Ros Gray - BreakthroughT1D (Diabetes charity)	Lisa Dicker - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance
Jill Patch - Bristol Airport Consultative Committee	Libby Herbert - Colostomy UK
Steve Ewens - Bristol Sight Loss Council	Liz Kelly - Bridging the Gap (Autism support)

Apologies

Andy Wright - Forum Chair	
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Welcome and Introductions

Jerry welcomed all attendees to the meeting, which was hosted in the Silver Zone meeting room at the airport. Introductions were made and apologies for **Andy** relayed, who was unable to attend due to ill health. **Jerry** continued by running through the main points of the agenda before handing over to **Richard** and **Martyn** to provide a more detailed summary of the airport's recent operational performance since the forum members last met.

Airport Business Overview

Richard started by advising the forum of the continual growth in passengers at the airport, which had seen a further 30% increase to the number of persons now requiring the services of the *assisted travel* department since last year. Making Bristol airport the fastest growing of any of the major UK airports since Covid.

Richard continued by sharing a number of the goals and ambitions the airport had set itself to achieve over the next five years. Explaining that due to the unprecedented level of growth in *assisted* passenger numbers, the airport was now looking at ways and means of further promoting autonomous journeys. So, in other words, for those passengers who prefer to make their own way through the airport without assistance, but in order to do so would benefit from a better understanding of their journey ahead. **Martyn** shared that the airport was looking to empower more passengers to become independent by providing improved public information in advance of a passenger's journey. For example, a video that could demonstrate the services available at Bristol airport. As well as the processes and procedures in place, and details of the airport journey, to enable better preplanning and awareness.

Therefore, plans were being drawn up, with support from a professional media agency, to help construct a storyboard for a proposed passenger information video. Then once completed and uploaded to the airport's website, it was hoped that the video would provide, for those passengers who would normally ask for support from the *Assisted Travel* department, a greater awareness of their journey ahead. Enabling them to travel independently and unassisted if they now preferred to do so.

Richard advised the members that more information would follow once finalised, before handing over to **Chay** from ABM.

ABM update

Chay, then introduced himself to the Forum members, initially providing an overview of himself and the previous roles he had performed prior to being appointed recently as the Senior General Manager for ABM at Bristol airport. The team responsible for managing the *Assisted Travel* department. **Chay** shared an operational structure chart of the ABM team at the airport, before talking through his particular areas of focus and ambitions for his new team. Highlighting details of the staffing numbers and roles that he wanted to recruit and have trained, in preparation for the summer season. Before providing an overview of the safety and performance expectations he had targeted his team to achieve this year. He then moved on to discuss in more detail, the recent performance of the *Assisted Travel* team, which for the last consecutive months has achieved the Civil Aviation Authority's (CAA) expected performance and service levels and they will be exceeded for the full reporting year.

Sam Saunders, then provided a summary of the Customer Experience surveys, which had been a particular area of focus for the airport in recent months. As during 2024, only 152 surveys have been sent out to passengers when they had returned home from their travels. **Sam** was pleased to share that over 240 surveys had been returned during February alone, as a result of this concerted effort to improve passenger feedback.

Sam was asked whether feedback was sought from overseas passengers arriving into Bristol before they returned home. She explained that as well as the feedback card itself, a QR code is also offered. Which when activated will take passengers directly to the survey itself. Thus providing, another alternative and successful way of encouraging high levels of customer feedback.

Sam then asked whether there were any further questions before handing over to **Verena**.

Customer feedback

Verena then started her presentation by sharing details of the number of complaints versus compliments and enquiries the airport had received, both directly and via the chatbot facility. These included various graphs which showed the number of complaints received by the airport during 2024, 7% of which were related to *Assisted Travel* passengers. Followed by further examples highlighting the main focus areas of complaints, such as the embarkation & disembarkation process, the assistance equipment and facilities, as well as staff attitude and waiting times. Moving on to compliments, which amounted to over 84 during last year, and mainly referred to the good levels of service and staff attitude that passengers had referred to.

Verena then moved on to discuss the chatbot interactions related to *assistance* at the airport. Which mainly included queries related to parking, how to make an *assistance* booking, or details about the *assistance* facilities at the airport. Concluding by highlighting the number of cases that had been taken to the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR), which is where a customer is encouraged to take their complaint if they are not satisfied by the response they have received from the airport. Throughout 2024 these amounted to a total of 5 cases. Following which, **Verena** shared a summary of the overall feedback received from passengers during 2024, which amounted to over 80% of Bristol airport's passengers saying they were happy with their travelling experience at the airport.

Verena then handed over to **Cherie** to provide an update on the airport's training and engagement ambitions.

Training and Engagement

Cherie then started her presentation by sharing a slide that highlighted her role as People Director at Bristol airport as well as that of her team. Whose roles it was to influence colleagues, business partners and suppliers, in terms of culture, ways of working and ultimately expectation. And these would all impact on the engagement with others in and around the airport environment and above all else, staff training.

Cherie went on to explain how the airport is currently revisiting their focus and approach on overall inclusion and that the last inclusion survey had taken place back in 2023. As well as consider how to better support those staff members who now identified as disabled. Moving on to discuss staff training and the desire of her team to work more closely with the Accessibility Forum and its members, to help improve their knowledge and understanding of disability awareness and neurodiversity, so they can help to drive better customer service throughout the airport.

Richard Tomlinson then ran through a number of his initial Disability Awareness slides he had prepared in order to share with the forum members. There was much discussion around content and possible areas for future improvement, but initial feedback was positive, and members agreed it was a good place to start from. Further information about the content can be found in the accompanying slide pack.

Security update

James Power then provided an update on Security for the forum members. Picking up from previous discussions regarding those particular passengers either with a stoma or with diabetes, some of whom may be using insulin pump for example. As it had been highlighted at the previous meeting that these categories of passenger were now more regularly being highlighted and possibly stopped whilst making their way through airport Security. This no doubt was because of the enhanced capability of the new Next Generation security scanners being introduced at airports across the UK. Which better identified anomalies on a scanned body, such as a colostomy bag or insulin pump for example.

James shared details of a conference that he and Bristol airport's Security provider (ICTS) had attended, along with **Libby** on behalf of Colostomy UK and representatives from Breakthrough T1D - on behalf of passengers who were diabetic. Which had been very successful and helped with creating greater awareness among Security officers. It included a new initiative introduced by the CAA and Colostomy UK to create a Travel Certificate for people living with a stoma/colostomy bag. The certificate contains the passenger's doctor's details along with a stamp from the surgery; in order to create greater awareness and to ensure officers treat these passengers with particular dignity and respect. This new concept was in addition to the existing CAA's Medical Device Awareness Card scheme, where passengers can carry the card with them when they travel.

James went on to explain how most of the ICTS Security officers had now undertaken a new enhanced DA training module, which incorporated specialist training on a variety of medical devices. With a particular emphasis on dignity and care. Advising how to best communicate with passengers either with a stoma or those who are diabetic and wearing different devices, so that they should not be screened. However, if a private search is deemed necessary, a supervisor must be called to ensure that the search is conducted in a highly professional manner causing minimal disruption or distress to the passenger.

Developments update

Jo then introduced herself before advising the forum members that she wanted to update them on the next 4 primary stages of the airport's ongoing development projects. These included...

- 1) **Public Transport Interchange (PTI) & Multi-Storey Car Park 2 (MSCP2)**
- 2) **New South Gates project** - which will involve creating 3 new stand gates, a new coaching forecourt, and a new segregated Arrivals route.

3) Departure Lounge (IDL) transformation - Jo informed the forum that terminal extensions would help to deliver a 70% growth in capacity, as well as introduce new 'look & feel' for customers. With Improved brand offer in retail & catering and a focus on customer flow and access to boarding gates. Not to mention an extension and refit to the *Assisted Travel* lounge.

4) Washroom Transformation plans - Following a new strategy to transform the airport's customer washrooms, these will be upgraded into inclusive, hygienic and robust facilities. Which will include a Male, Female, Accessible & Universal toilet facility and a full family changing/toilet space, which is due for completion by June 25 (further information can be found in the attached slide pack).

AOB

There were no further questions or points raised by the forum members.

Jerry thanked the members for their attendance and contributions to what had been a very thorough and beneficial meeting, saying Andy would be in touch with all members again when he is back at work.

Actions

- To provide Forum members with an update on-PTI/MSPC2 walkabout/inspection? .

Next BRSAF meeting - Tuesday, 28 October 2025