

Agenda Bristol airport Inclusion Committee (B.I.C) Forum

Tuesday 22 March 2022 11:00 a.m.

Attendees:	
Andy Wright - Chair	Richard Thomasson - Head of Customer Operations, BRS
Martyn Collings - Operational Support Manager, BRS	Lisa Wildblood - Facilities Manager, BRS
Kate O'Dare - Project Manager (Buildings), BRS	Andrew Morris - Retail Operations Manager, BRS
Mat Storer - DHL, BRS	Leigh-Anne Borkar - General Manager OCS, BRS
Lesley McEwen - AccessAble	Libby Herbert - Colostomy UK
Adam Mitchallat-Cox - BDAA	Gordon Richardson - Bristol Disability Equality Forum
Debbie - Bristol Autism Project, FACE	Geoff & Mandy Palmer - Guide Dogs for the Blind
Bianca Rossetti - Age UK	
Apologies:	
Verena Fuller - Customer Relations Manager, BRS	Simon Laken - Stroke Association
Emma Hotchkiss – RNID	Kinny Chinangwa - WECIL
Josh Wintersgill - Able Move Ltd	Tony Hall - BDAA

Welcome and introductions followed by actions from previous meeting

Andy welcomed and introduced the B.I.C. members before running through the agenda for the day. There were no outstanding action points from the previous meeting as, due to Covid, the purpose of the last Forum had simply been to update members on recent airport activities.

There was however a wheelchair handling issue that was brought to the airport's attention by Josh at the previous meeting, which was discussed in more detail later during the DHL presentation.

General business overview and update

Richard then introduced himself to the Forum members and provided an update on recent activities.

He started by highlighting the positive passenger growth the airport had experienced, following relaxation of the travel requirements. Which had undoubtedly provided greater customer confidence, especially for those who had received all their Covid vaccinations.

The airport was now forecasting continuing passenger growth, with projections that could equal, or even exceed, those experienced in 2019. To date there had been a strong demand in Leisure and holiday traffic, with encouraging signs that there was a real appetite to travel from Bristol airport. That said, **Richard** did express some concerns with the rapid increase in passenger numbers, prior to the airport having the necessary number of staff in place. He highlighted ongoing challenges with staff recruitment, which is currently around 70% of anticipated requirement, with the forthcoming summer schedules due to commence shortly. This he felt could present issues at certain times of the day going forward, which may unfortunately have an adverse effect on maintaining the CAA's ECAC performance scores.

Richard then told the Forum that there was thankfully, now a focus on progressing a Family friendly/Accessible Lane through Security. The Forum members were happy with the news and expressed their preference for a more dignified airport experience, which would allow more time to shop and relax, rather than feeling obligated to be moved through the airport to/from the aircraft as quickly as possible.

AccessAble Presentation

Lesley from AccessAble (a website and app designed to provide independent access assessments of over 100,000 venues throughout the UK) then introduced herself and began her presentation.

She explained how the product currently has nearly 3½ million users and is a valuable resource for those who require access information about hotels, restaurants, visitor attractions, as well as airports. Bristol airport is currently featured on the website, where accessibility is enhanced with the inclusion of the Recite Me toolbar - see attached document for further information.

Bianca asked if there was also in information in a non-digital format for those persons, some of whom may be elderly, who do not have access to a smart phone or the Internet?

Lesley responded saying that she can provide information leaflets and marketing material in accessible formats to partners and service users.

Debbie asked how often the information was checked, and where appropriate, updated.

Lesley said that reviews were conducted on an annual basis but where critical information had changed during that time, including structural changes, then the company had a helpline or web-based facility to advise AccessAble of any such changes.

Some questions around the validity of the service for PRM passengers flying from Bristol airport were raised.

Martyn said that the airport will continue to monitor customer engagement. As well as ensuring that all information displayed on the site, including details about the terminal building, luggage collection area and the car rental building, is current and up-to-date.

The Forum's feedback overall was positive, with most members feeling it was a valuable tool for passengers wanting to check out specific access information in advance of their journey.

Terminal and Retail & Catering Developments

Kate, responsible for building development projects in and around the airport terminal, then introduced herself to the Forum and shared several slides featuring the proposed development of the Check-in area within the terminal.

Andy asked whether consideration had been given to external signage directing passengers into the appropriate entrances of the terminal. So as to ensure passengers were guided to the closest entrance to their respective airlines check-in desks.

Adam noted that the only available lifts to the Security area, on the floor above, were located at the far end of the concourse. Which could result in a longer walk for some passengers if they were checking-in at the opposite end of the terminal.

Kate explained that unfortunately there was no scope in install lifts in other locations due to the existing terminal design.

Andy asked whether the PRM desk could be closer to the lift.

Kate explained that unfortunately there is currently no other space available in the concourse. It was therefore agreed that the new proposed location for the Special Assistance desk is probably situated in the best space available, given the circumstances.

Gordon asked if hearing loops would be located at key locations within the newly designed space.

Martyn confirmed this would be the case.

Andrew, Bristol airport's Retail Operations Manager, then provided artists impressions with further information, about the new retail units scheduled to open in the months ahead.

Kate asked about the accessibility in the retail area and how it varies at other airports.

Andy advised that there were challenges in a lot of retail sites at other airports. This is often as a result of Accessibility and Inclusion not always being treated as a priority by designers, inevitably leading to costly retrofitting and adjustments being necessary.

Libby asked whether payments could still be made with cash or had the airport now become a card only facility.

Kate confirmed that cash payments, as well as cards, are now accepted by all the shops and retail units. Recognising older customers still prefer to pay with cash.

Forum members were therefore happy with the proposed plans so far. But did ask that all future build and design proposals are shared with the Forum prior to sign off, in order that any alterations could be considered before completion.

DHL (Wheelchair and luggage Handling agent) Performance

Mat, DHL then introduced himself and started by describing to the Forum, the role of DHL as a Ground Handling Agent at the airport. He also talked about the similar challenges he and his team had experienced with staffing, especially recruitment, both during and post pandemic.

Mat also explained in more detail the importance of good communication between DHL and other stakeholders at the airport, especially as far as electric mobility aids (EMA's) were concerned. So that the appropriate allocation of staff can be planned for in advance. This point was raised as a result of the observations made by **Josh Wintersgill** during his last visit to Bristol airport, which were highlighted to the Forum at the previous meeting. **Josh** had observed his own power chair being lifted from the ground onto the belt loader, which was at approximately waist height.

Mat explained that DHL do have an assessment process to manually handle EMA's, which is in line with the latest Health & Safety requirements, despite **Josh's** concerns.

The airport does also have an existing device called a Mobi-loader, designed to move heavy objects, such as EMA's, from the ground onto the belt loader. But **Mat** suggested that the reliability is poor and may not necessarily always be suitable for purpose.

It was therefore agreed that a more appropriate solution should be sought, which could include some form of modification to the existing belt loader.

Andy said he would investigate further and then liaise with **Mat** and **Martyn** to consider possible alternative solutions.

OCS (Special Assistance provider) Service Performance

Leigh-Anne, General Manager, OCS then provided an update on the Special Assistance performance over the last few months, saying that it had been good despite the inevitable staff challenges and the recent increase in passenger numbers. A score of over 99% had been achieved for the CAA's ECAC airport performance measures. This despite the impact of the recent storm, which had severely challenged the airport's operation at that time.

Martyn advised that again recent passenger feedback had been positive and praised the OCS Special Assistance team for their excellent performance during such demanding times.

Martyn then briefly mentioned airport Security, following a recent complaint that had been raised by a forum member. The complaint was being investigated and would be responded to in due course.

Richard also added that the recruitment and mandatory training for Security staff is now a 3-month process before they qualify and can then work in the operation. But there are still improvements being made and considered with Security.

But it did raise a number of training related questions from the forum.

Adam enquired, as a result of the airport's ongoing recruitment drive, whether new recruits would still be undertaking dementia training,

Debbie and **Libby** also wanted to know more about current training content and material and whether they and their respective charities could support the airport's current staff training programme.

Martyn said that he was currently undertaking a review of the training package delivered to all staff members, with a view to rolling out a new training package later this year.

Andy then proposed, when the Forum members are next able to undertake an airport tour, a visit through Security should be included in order to observe and ensure staff performance is assessed.

Andy concluded by saying he would liaise with Forum members directly to gather any disability related guidance and further information they could provide, in order to modernise and enrich existing staff training modules

AOB

Richard then provided a brief update on the airport's proposed App, stating that the project had unfortunately not yet moved forward, due to the more pressing focus on the imminent growth anticipated for the Spring/Summer season. However, this is something that will be revisited later in the year.

Bianca expressed an interest in also inviting an older representative of AgeUK to attend the forum in the future, which was welcomed by all.

Andy then added he would like to include more feedback, and indeed guest visits, by service users from any of the charities and disability organisations represented at the Forum. And if any members had somebody they would like to propose, to please let him know.

Actions:

- **Karen** and **Andrew** to liaise with Andy as and when, and forward information related to any new proposed development works, so that they can be shared with forum members.
- **Andy** to liaise with **Mat** and **Martyn** regarding possible belt loader solutions to support EMA lifting.
- **Andy** to liaise with forum members to gather disability related content for possible inclusion into future staff training modules. Following which share the information with **Martyn** and **Verena**.
- **Andy** to liaise with **Martyn** and **Verena** to organise dates for a terminal inspection by Forum members.

Next Forum scheduled for Wednesday 19 October 2022