

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

Thursday 23 November 2023 11:00 a.m.

Attendees:

Andy Wright - Chair	Martyn Collings - Operational Support Manager, BRS
Verena Fuller - Customer Relations Manager, BRS	Emma Thomas - Customer Relations, BRS
Kate O'Dare – Building Projects Manager, BRS	Laura Blackburn - Building Projects Manager, BRS
Jon Jones - General Manager OCS, BRS	Adam Mitchallat-Cox - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance
Gordon Richardson - Bristol Disability Equality Forum	Jerry Angrave - Strategic Customer Experience Consultant
Steve Ewens - Bristol Sight Loss Council	Jill Patch - Bristol Airport Consultative Committee

Apologies:

Richard Thomasson - Head of Customer Operations, BRS	Tony Hall - Bristol Dementia Action Alliance
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Welcome and Previous Actions

Andy welcomed and introduced the BIC Forum members before running through the agenda for the day. He started by asking the airport management team for updates on actions brought forward from the previous meeting. Which included an update on the findings from the website workshop with the Forum members earlier in the year.

Martyn said that the airport had benefited greatly from the input provided by the Forum members, with most of the points raised at the workshop now added to the updated website. He encouraged Forum members and their respective service users to navigate the website and to relay any functionality issues or omissions they encounter.

Andy then asked if there had been any progress on the proposed new loading equipment, previously mentioned, that would aid the embarkation of power chairs and scooters into aircraft at Bristol.

Martyn advised that options were still being trialled and evaluated by DHL. As initial feedback from Edinburgh airport staff, who were using similar equipment at their airport to the model being considered by Bristol. Reported that their lifting machine had not been very successful and therefore was not often used by the airport ground agents. So, he said that Bristol Airport were still exploring the market for suitable alternatives.

However, the expansion of Aviramps (as an alternative to steps) at the airport was more positive. With a number of airlines including Jet2, Tui, and Ryanair now all expressing interest in using this equipment for their passengers in 2024.

Finally, **Andy** asked about the PRM Assist app that had been adopted by the airport recently and whether the airport was aware of how many passengers, who had required assistance, may have used it in recent months.

Martyn said to his knowledge approximately 300 passengers per month had been using the app. Which he admitted was not a huge uptake in terms of volume, especially against the volumes of passengers who were assisted through the airport during that period. But he would continue to monitor its usage, and passenger feedback in relation to the app, in the months ahead and update the Forum accordingly at the next meeting.

General Business Update

Martyn then provided a brief update to the Forum members on recent activities and future plans for the airport. He started by advising that the airport had seen its busiest summer during 2023 with over 1 million passengers travelling through the airport in a single month. With expectations by the end of 2023 to be just short of 10 million passengers. There had also been considerable improvements to performance from both the ground handling agents and airport Security teams compared to previous years. The airport had also opened a number of new retail and catering units since the beginning of the year.

Planning approval for up to 12 million passengers per year had now been granted. So, this had now triggered a number of new building development projects to be commissioned in and around the airport. Supported by passenger feedback to inform future developments to improve the airport infrastructure and customer experience.

Martyn then highlighted other challenges the airport had had to overcome during the year, which included the PRM and Coaching services performance. Consequently, both contracts were now being re-tendered and additional vehicles had been added to the fleet. Taking the number of Ambu-lifts up to 8 for Summer 24.

He concluded by saying that he was excited about 2024. But was still conscious of certain challenges that will remain whilst the airport manages the increasing number of passengers, alongside considerable infrastructure improvements and development work into next year.

Customer Relations Update

Verena then shared her presentation with the Forum, which highlighted the various changes that had been made to the airport's Customer Relations Management system. Including an improved classification system designed to better identify the root cause of many customers complaints and more importantly confirm which stakeholder was directly responsible for the issue. Already this system has helped to hold other business partners to account for service failures and drive improvements to service levels across the airport.

She then explained the complaint investigation process, which was subdivided into three escalation stages. Fortunately, most complaints were normally satisfactorily resolved within this process.

Gordon asked what happens when a customer was still not happy with the airport's response to their complaint, even after stage 3.

Verena explained that if the complainant was still not satisfied after stage 3, they would have the option to take their issue directly to the Centre for Effective Dispute Resolution (CEDR).

Verena then advised how all complaints received by the airport are now fed directly into the CRM system giving her department full oversight of all the issues that had been raised. She advised that Bristol airport had received 220 complaints in relation to the *Special Assistance* service this year. With the three main areas being service delivery, staff attitude and PRM service levels. Hence why considerable effort and expense has now been invested into improving staffing levels and training for the OCS team - responsible for providing the *Special Assistance* service.

Jerry asked whether there had been a noticeable reduction in complaints since the stabilisation of the PRM service.

Verena said it was still too early to tell as many of the changes had only recently taken effect. But she would monitor feedback relating to the *Special Assistance* service in the months ahead and update the Forum at the next meeting.

Steve felt that 'staff attitude', being the biggest category of upheld complaints mentioned, was such an essential factor that it was very important to address this robustly.

Jon accepted this and mentioned that his team are now in a much better place with improved levels of motivation, quality, and customer service skills.

Andy asked whether commercial contracts were managed and reviewed accordingly, where complaints relating to a particular supplier of contracted service were fairly consistent.

Jill mentioned that she had been made aware of a number of complaints that had not being responded to in a timely manner.

Verena admitted that on some occasions, high volumes of complaints had led to delays in responding within the required timeframe due to the capacity of the team. But ordinarily everyone should receive a response within 15 days of their issue being raised.

Verena continued, by talking about the number of compliments the airport had also received this year and how 37% of them related to the *Special Assistance* service. A number of examples were then shared with the Forum members. She then went on to explain how the number of airport enquiries had gone up considerably. With over 62% of these asking how passengers could book the *Special Assistance* service. There were also a number of new requests by passengers with a hidden condition, asking if they could arrange a familiarisation tour of the airport prior to travel or asking how they could book the Sensory Room when they fly from the airport. Therefore, the airport's IT team were now looking at *chatbot* option to be included on the airport's website. In order to relieve the pressure on the Customer Relations department, by answering such questions directly.

Verena then shared findings from the 'Feedback Now', Smiley faces push button consols, displayed throughout the airport. Which demonstrated an increase in passenger satisfaction scores of over 77%, which was an improvement on the 2022 results. Also, with the introduction of a number of QR code scanning machines, passengers were now able to write comments relating to their airport experience in the moment. Which helped by providing more granular detail about the specifics of their airport journey.

Adam asked whether these comments were gauged on what is valued and does it influence the service?

Verena responded by saying they were analysed, and service improvements were informed through the feedback received.

Verena concluded her presentation by advising the Forum members that whilst she was happier many of the issues identified during 2023 had now been addressed and would hopefully lead to an improvement in customer feedback statistics during 2024. She was also painfully aware that the considerable development work to the airport infrastructure taking place over the winter and into next year, will likely lead to some passenger disruption and increased anxiety. This reason alone will no doubt have a negative impact on some passenger feedback for next year unfortunately.

Steve asked if a copy of Verena's presentation could be shared with him following the meeting, so he could study the statistics and data in more detail by using his screen reader.

Andy said he would be happy to share copies of all the presentations with the Forum members following the meeting.

Future Airport Development Project

Laura and **Kate** then introduced themselves to the Forum members and began by explaining some of the forthcoming changes planned with the new development work at the airport.

Kate started by sharing architectural designs demonstrating various options for proposed changes and alterations in and around the terminal. She explained how a number of bottlenecks within the existing infrastructure had been identified. So, her team were now keen to improve passenger flow in and around the terminal, especially the check-in concourse. Saying that there will also be further improvements made once the MSCP2 project is delivered in 2025. As this will provide a dedicated exit for Arriving passengers without them having to cross over with those passengers entering the terminal

Laura then discussed how the architects were planning to relocate the *Special Assistance* facility, especially whilst building work is undertaken, to a more central location which was closer to the shops and retail areas.

Forum members mostly liked this proposition, because of its proximity to shops and restaurants, whilst still being close enough to the toilets. However, some concerns were raised as to possible noise levels, and whether it would be suitable for those passengers who wanted to be more secluded and away from lots of activity and crowds.

Adam asked whether there were plans to move the Sensory room to this area. Also was there a possibility of adding a Quiet room or at least a partitioned space - perhaps with some soundproofing - within the *Special Assistance* area as well.

Laura said she was keen to look at all possibilities and seek views and opinions from everybody. Especially those with particular sensory or cognitive considerations and said she would be more than happy to share the proposed designs with the Forum members.

In order that they could consider the options and advise on any particular additions they felt should be included in the *Special Assistance* lounge area.

Andy said he had been involved in similar exercises at other airports, where persons with autism, dementia as well as those with sensory impairments, had provided feedback. These had included wish list items and facilities to be considered for inclusion into such *Assistance* lounges. So, he would be happy to share those with Laura after the meeting.

Jill asked whether for the airport planned to introduce Travellators (moving walkways) to the airport in order to support the less mobile or elderly community.

Laura replied saying there were no plans in the short term. But the airport is currently looking at a number of support apparatus, such as buggies and I-caddies that could be deployed in certain parts of the terminal.

Andy then mentioned again the need for a *PRM Airport Journey* video to be included on the website. As it would help to reduce the number of enquiries, as well as some possible PRM passenger anxieties. By explaining to passengers in advance of their visit to the airport, what the airport journey would look like and what to expect.

Laura then went on to explain how the airport Security Hall will soon also be modified to incorporate the next generation of security machines. As the UK government want the new technology to be installed and up and running by Summer 24. It is hoped this more modern scanning equipment, which will allow liquids and electrical equipment to remain in passengers hand luggage, will help to speed up the processing time through Security and reduce queues significantly.

Kate continued by discussing the airport's new strategy towards passenger toilets. Explaining the desire to move to larger toilet blocks, more centralised in the Departure Lounge and on the Mezzanine level. These would include dedicated family stalls/baby change facilities which would be non-gendered, alongside separate dedicated larger accessible toilets. Designed to encourage families not to use the accessible toilets without justification.

Gordon asked whether there were plans to install a Changing Places facility airside.

Kate advised that she would like to do this, but nothing has been finalised as yet. She also asked whether Forum members had a desire to have an accessible toilet in the *Special Assistance* lounge area itself.

Gordon and **Andy** both agreed that this would be their preference. As well as an accessible toilet being installed within the arrival hall, as you enter back into the terminal building from your flight.

Jerry then pointed out that it was very important for the airport to ensure that all their infrastructure improvements were future proofed. As the cost of retrofitting facilities forgotten or overlooked at the initial build stage, can be very expensive to correct at a later stage.

Kate said she would prepare a proposed pack for the new toilet block design for the Forum members to consider and provide feedback on.

AOB

Andy then asked if there were any questions or other points Forum members would like to raise or have included in future meetings. A number of Forum members said they thought it would be good if invitations could be extended to representatives of airlines and ground agents operating at Bristol Airport. As well as members of Security and Border Force to talk about their respective roles within the airport and look at their own Disability Awareness staff training modules.

Andy then thanked everybody for their attendance and continued support, saying that he would be in touch again soon to provide dates for the 2024 meetings.

Actions:

- **Martyn** to update the Forum at the next meeting on progress with PRM Assist app.
- **Laura** and **Kate** to provide details of finalised plans, once agreed, regarding infrastructure projects.
- **Security** to advise timelines for new technology installation and invite Forum members to review process.
- Review Disability Awareness staff training modules provided by the airport and service partners.

2024 Forums scheduled for Thursday 21 March and Tuesday 5 November