

Minutes: Bristol Airport Accessibility Forum (BRS AF)

Tuesday 28 October 2025 - Lulsgate House Conference Room 10:30 A.M.

Attendees:

Andy Wright - Forum Chair	Scott Deacon-Church - Head of Terminal Operations, BRS
Martyn Collings - Operational Support Manager, BRS	Jo Chase - Project Manager (Buildings), BRS
Cherie Marchant - People Director, BRS	Richard Tomlinson - Learning & Development, BRS
Verena Fuller - Customer Relations Manager, BRS	Callum Jordan - Training, ICTS
Sam Saunders - Head of Assisted Services, ABM	Mark Armstrong - General Manager ABM, BRS
Juste Bunikyte - Senior Ops Manager ABM, BRS	Emily Kilby - Civil Aviation Authority
Peter Bungay - Guide Dogs For The Blind	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)
Jerry Angrave - Customer Experience Consultant	Gordon Richardson MBE - Chair Bristol Polio Fellowship
Ros Gray - Breakthrough T1D (Diabetes Charity)	
Apologies:	
Gaynor Thompson - Spinal Injuries Association	

Welcome and Introductions

Andy welcomed all attendees to the meeting, which was hosted in Bristol Room A at Lulsgate House, before running through the agenda for the day. Following which he handed over to Scott and Martyn to provide a summary of the airport's recent operational performance since the forum members last met.

Airport Business Overview

Scott started by introducing himself announcing that he had now assumed overall control of Terminal Operations at the airport following the recent departure of Richard Thomasson. Saying he would now be working closely with Martyn and the Assisted Travel providers ABM, to continue the good work and service performance that had already been started by the airport.

Scott then provided a brief summary of the previous five years passenger numbers, along with the YTD 2025 performance data, highlighting Bristol airport's passenger trends over the years. Understandably the airport has seen record growth during 2022, following the Covid epidemic, but had since seen a gradual decline in passenger growth since that time. However Assisted Travel requests had continued to exceed overall passenger growth statistics.

Martyn continued by saying the airport is expected to continue to experience growth and was now pursuing its goal to further redevelop the site facilities in preparation for the increased numbers.

Martyn then advised that Bristol airport will have new ownership as of the 1st November 2025, with Mcquarie now being a major shareholder. This could result in a new Main board of Directors being appointed, but reassured members by saying that McQuarrie are supportive of the developments already planned.

Andy added that he had seen a number of UK airports recently who potentially had over budgeted with forward projected growth based upon the 2022 figures. But felt the travel market was now softening for all airports, so it was unlikely they would all meet forecasted numbers. Saying that he felt growth would continue but not at the rate as originally anticipated.

Scott then went on to discuss the airport's recent NPS results (Net Promoter Score - a customer satisfaction and loyalty metric), which had seen a number of positive responses being received so far. Bristol airport's aim was to receive a 'good' certification overall, despite being a bit up and down so far this year. Starting May with a score of 17 but then reaching 33 in August, which coincided with the opening of the new toilet block and the Passenger Transport Interchange.

Ros mentioned that a survey had been launched by her charity, BreakthroughT1D, to capture feedback about T1D traveller's experiences travelling through airport Security. Much of the feedback was still being collated and analysed. But **Andy** was keen to know whether patterns had yet emerged and if the feedback information could be shared with airports.

Ros said as yet it had not been decided. But her understanding was that Bristol had fared quite well judging by the information that had already been received.

A general discussion then took place with Ros around customers having the confidence to book the assisted travel service if they felt a need for it.

Martyn mentioned that the airport was improving messaging and information sharing for travellers in advance, such as the new video that has been created to provide confidence to travellers who may normally seek support when flying. These customers could now potentially self-mobilise should they wish to, by having more critical information provided in advance of travel. A copy of the airport video is available to view on the accompanying presentation pack. In addition, he summarised some of the community engagement that had also taken place earlier in the year. Which included a sight loss staff awareness/training session for a number of ground handling staff and security officers. Which was supported by **Peter** from Guide Dogs and **Steve** representing the Sight Loss Councils. There had also been an opportunity earlier in the year for the forum members to attend an inspection visit of the recently opened multi-storey car park and transport interchange facilities.

ABM update

Ju opened ABMs presentation by summarising the recent ECAC figures for Bristol airport (being the official time metrics set by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to compare and monitor UK airports performance against each other). These had been very strong over the last 12 months and showed significant improvement to previous years.

Jerry whilst impressed was more interested to know more about how customer feedback was collated and measured by the CAA. Asking whether it was through the customer survey results, supported by the feedback acquired from the various customer feedback terminals distributed throughout the terminal. Martyn confirmed that there is a survey that is promoted to customers that allows them to feedback on the service, these results are shared with the CAA and the results form part of the annual rating.

Ju moved on to discuss recent additions to the Assisted Travel fleet. Which included 4 new electric Aviogel Thunderlift Ambulifts of which 3 were already in service and had resulted from a huge investment in equipment.

Steve asked if there were customers who didn't need the use of the Thunderlifts for example, then was there other equipment on offer that could support them.

Ju replied saying there were also minibuses available, but at times it was often more operationally efficient to try and use one team/piece of equipment when supporting a number of customers arriving on a single flight. Also, as Bristol airport has a number of 'non-contact stands', it can make the operation at times very vehicle dependent.

Ju then discussed the introduction of new product known as the 'Portaramp' into the operation (Pictures of which can be found in the accompanying presentation pack). Which were designed primarily for wheelchair users on board an Ambulift, who use the aisle chair in order to access their aircraft seat. So as to better bridge the gap between the

Ambulift and the aircraft itself. She said that ABM were still developing the necessary staff training module and risk assessments before going live with this new product. But felt confident that the new ramp will provide a much smoother transfer, and in turn greater comfort, for the passenger while transferring seats on an aircraft.

Ju then asked handing over to **Jo Chase**, the project manager for new development work at the airport.

Developments update

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

Development of the South Gates, which once completed would provide 3 new fully accessible gates.

Completion of the recently introduced **Passenger Terminal Interchange (PTI)**, which has now seen additional seating installed around the assistance points following passenger and forum member feedback. As well as new intercoms installed and additional washrooms added.

Jill asked whether more proactive wayfinding/signage had been considered in and around the PTI, such as directional arrows towards the doorways for example. As during the forum members inspection visit it appeared at times to be very busy with many passengers unclear about where to go. **Jo** said she was aware and it was still being monitored to seek more information about passenger trends. But a further inspection visit was currently being planned which would also enable forum members to look at and provide feedback on the new washrooms and temporary Assisted Travel lounge

Terminal Transformation, which would require extensions to be added both to the west and south of the current building. So as to create new retail and catering space, a new assistance lounge, improved accessibility to Arrivals (with wider stairs and additional lifts), and expansion of the baggage reclaim hall. The airport was also looking to increase the number of public seats by 200 in the main terminal with a further 900 in and around the catering units. Whilst increasing the number of accessible and family toilets as well. She continued by saying consultation with the forum members would take place prior to any building work taking place.

Assisted Travel Lounge relocation. Which will move in November from its existing area by gate 1, until at least next Aug, to allow for steel works to be placed above the existing space. Therefore, all the facilities will be moved across to the new location including the Sensory room. This will also enable a Quiet Zone to be created at the far end of the new temporary facility. Work has already started, and it was hoped that the move will take place on the 15th of November.

Andy asked whether some of the lighting could be dimmed within the lounge in its new location. As he had noted from his experiences at another airport that had just installed a similar new lounge. Passengers who wanted a less well-lit environment whilst trying to relax and destress, had struggled at times without this option.

Jo feedback that the lighting in the newly proposed location had not yet been finalised, so she would take on board the comments made.

Ros was also keen to know whether there would be a clean private space provided in the new area, for those passengers who need to change diabetes-related devices or equipment outside the toilet area.

Jo advised that the final specification for the lounge had not yet been finalised, so reasonable adjustments or considerations could be included. Asking whether **Ros** could provide pictures or examples of other similar environments that were suitable so she could do a comparison.

Libby also asked **Jo** to remember the need for her bathroom designers to factor in the appropriate requirements for passengers with a stoma i.e. a longer mirror adjacent to a shelf or appropriate surface for example.

Jo then concluded her presentation and handed over to **Verena Fuller**, the Customer Relations Manager.

Customer feedback

Verena started by summarising the changes in customer complaint related trends over the last couple of years. Saying that Bristol airport had unfortunately seen a dramatic increase to the number of fraudulent cases during the year. But thankfully due to a stronger working relationship between the airport and ABM the percentage of complaints in 2025 being upheld, had been reduced compared to the previous year.

However, it had been noted that a larger percentage of these related to inbound passengers rather than outbound. Many of which have been attributed to, amongst other things, staff attitude and service-related allegations. Yet the overall service provided to *assisted travel* passengers since ABM had commenced its contract at Bristol, had considerably improved. Especially when investigating allegations, due to enhanced levels of data capture, CCTV and witness reports for example.

Andy asked what the major trends for complaints with ABM were.

Ju advised that a number of customers had said they felt there were too many unnecessary or repeated questions asked of them by the ABM team during the assistance process. **Ju** said that this was an area ABM were looking further into. But felt whilst all the questions asked were necessary and for the passenger's well-being. Many of them had no doubt already been asked by airline staff already through the booking process, however unfortunately, the answers are not always all relayed to the ABM staff. This was an issue that the government backed Task and Finish group had been asked to evaluate. As it appeared that a lack of joined up collaborative *assistive technology* being utilised throughout the industry was highlighting such issues.

Verena asked whether the forum members would like a monthly report about the feedback being received from customers, which could be filtered around various subjects.

Andy said he would talk with fellow forum members and let Verena know.

Andy then commented that the wayfinding and colour contrasts used for car parking designations may need to be reviewed in the future.

Verena said that most of the *assisted travel* complaints still centred around Security which she felt was common to most airports. But there had been a noticeable increase in the number of complaints related to airport security private searches. Many of which were from diabetic passengers who wore glucose monitors or insulin pumps. As well as those passengers with a stoma.

A general conversation followed around the safety of the recently installed security and X-ray machines allegedly making devices unserviceable. As well as the perceptions of some customers who felt that they do not need to be searched, despite being told otherwise by security officers that they do. Which had caused a lot of unnecessary unease and confusion in recent months.

Verena concluded her presentation before handing over to **Cherie Marchant** and **Richard Tomlinson**.

Training and Engagement

Cherie started her presentation by sharing further details of the Equality Impact Assessments for the airport's staff members she first started to introduce in 2023. They were designed to update staff and passengers about new projects, processes, functions or processes taking place at the airport. All of which were to promote inclusion and prevent unintentional disadvantage or exclusion. Examples of which were then shared with members of the forum,

who were then involved with completing various tasks to help them better understand the purpose and outcomes of such assessments.

Cherie went on to say that the airport had now progressed from a Level 2 to a Level 3 as a Disability Confident Employer, which they were very proud of. As it gladly recognises the effort from colleagues and the business to date. Yet she understood that there was still much to be done, especially when accommodating the airport's various staff members who had a disability. Especially the environment within or around the head office building itself. Including all round accessibility and whether doorways were wide enough or not too heavy to push open for a wheelchair user to utilise for example. Or indeed for fellow staff members to better understand their colleagues who may have a nonvisible condition for example. As she felt that many physical disabilities were better recognised and accommodated for. Whereas many staff were less confident with those persons with a hidden or non-visible condition., Therefore, there was a greater need to look at improved disability awareness/etiquette training.

Richard then introduced himself, informing the members that a new Disability Awareness training module had been launched earlier in the year. This was aligned to Toolbox Talk content which the airport delivered to primary customer-facing teams (Ground Transportation & Terminal Operations). During May 2025 a soft launch of content to targeted teams was delivered to obtain feedback prior to a full roll-out.

50 colleagues provided feedback, as highlighted below:

1. Clear and concise content – 84% positive
2. Accessible (simple and easy to navigate) - 88% positive
3. Right length for the topic – 84% positive
4. Confident about the topic covered – 82% positive

This was then assigned to all Bristol Airport colleagues resulting in 426 active enrolments. 91% of active colleagues had now completed the course (389 completions).

Andy asked whether staff were assessed to determine if they actually passed or failed the course. To which **Richard** said that no assessment was currently included but will be added in the future.

He said that during November a gap analysis assessment will take place, to identify areas still requiring improvement or further training. Which will include both online and face-to-face training.

Richard said that little face-to-face training had been delivered to Bristol airport staff so far. But a face-to-face Disability Confidence course had been completed by 22 senior members of the business.

Richard then asked the forum members for any recommendations in relation to suppliers who create and deliver face-to-face disability awareness courses such as Hemsley Fraser Training and Connexions. To which **Steve** recommended WECIL, being the West of England Centre for Inclusive Living.

Andy also added that there was a lot of expertise and experience contained within the BRSAF members who could no doubt support such ventures, if they were remunerated accordingly for their time and expertise.

Richard then concluded before handing over **Callum Jordan** who was responsible for training members of Bristol airport's security team , which is run by an organisation called ICTS.

Security update

Callum introduced himself before explaining how most of the ICTS Security officers had now undertaken a new enhanced Disability Awareness training module. Which now incorporated specialist training including a variety of medical devices. With a particular emphasis on dignity and care, the course advised ways of how to best communicate with passengers, be they with a stoma or those who are diabetic and wear varying devices. Preventing them from being screened in the normal way. **Callum** further explained, that 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.

A general discussion then took place around items that are worn or carried by passengers. Which prior to the introduction of the Next Generation security scanners, would not have created a need for them to identify themselves. So then further discussions took place around are airports doing enough to raise awareness of the new processes.

Jerry asked whether more onus needs to be put on the airlines.

Ros suggested that maybe charities could be tagged into any social media campaigns run by the airport to help create greater awareness.

Sam suggested that some guidance is already given by the DfT, but as **Libby** is now working as a specialist adviser to this group, she will hopefully find out more information in the near future.

Callum then handed over to **James Ross**, who was the airport's Retail Performance Executive.

Assistance Lounge food proposition

James then introduced himself before explaining how he was keen to receive forum member feedback on a proposition to provide selective food to be delivered to the Assistance Lounge prior to customers taking off. He proposed working with two providers initially. One who could offer on a selection of soft drinks, sandwiches and crisps. With the other offering a small range of fresh pizza cooked to order. Consequently, he was keen to seek feedback prior to advancing his initial conversations with suppliers.

A general discussion took place considering the different options and proposing possible issues with such a scheme. These included the delivery timelines in order for the food to be comfortably consumed before passengers were called to board their aircraft. As well as concerns with possible lingering food smells which could cause distress for other passengers, especially with those who had particular sensitivity issues.

As well as concerns with waste disposal, maintaining cleanliness and whether such food should be consumed on a passenger's lap or would tables or appropriate eating services be provided.

James was grateful for the feedback and said he would use this to help him to decide upon next steps.

AOB

Andy then asked whether the forum members had any further comments or questions they wanted to raise.

Gordon wanted to know with regard to the airport's taxi contract, which he knew had recently gone out to tender, whether there was a provision of an accessible vehicle had been considered in the contract.

Martyn confirmed that the procurement team have been asked to ensure this is contained within the new tender.

Andy then thanked the members for their attendance and input to a comprehensive and beneficial meeting, saying he would be in touch with all members in due course, to circulate the minutes and next year's goals and objectives.

Proposed 2026 forum meetings - Wednesday 04 March 2026 & Wednesday 28th October 2026