

**AccessABZ**

**Monday 18th September 2017**

**Attendees**

Kevin Douglas, AIA

Fraser Bain (FB), AIA

Robert Horsburgh, AIA

Stan Flett, Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance

Alistair Williamson, Access Panel

Judith Forbes, NHS Grampian

Sam Reid, Deaf Action

Glyn Morris, Friendly Access

Pamela Munro, Guide Dogs for the Blind

Andrea Barclay, North East Sensory Services

Xandra Shearer, NHS Orkney

Katrina Michie, Shopmobility

Shona Owen, Service User

Joan Allan, G4S

**Apologies**

Sarah Geoghegan Alzheimer Scotland – Action on Dementia

Diane King Grampian Opportunities

Phionna McInnes Me Too Magazine!

**Notes from Meeting**

Introductions

FB welcomed everyone to the Forum including Glyn Morris from Friendly Access and Pamela Munro from Guide Dogs for the Blind, who were both attending their first Access Forum meeting.

1. Airport Operational Update

FB provided a summary of 2017 year to date (August) in terms of the overall passenger numbers and specific data concerning Passengers with Reduced Mobility. (PRM’s).

Excluding helicopter passenger numbers the airport has handled 1,817,687 passengers in 2017 so far which represents a 2.66% rise on 2016 figures at the same point. In summary following the significant decline in passenger numbers overall in 2016 the number of passengers travelling through the airport has steadied throughout the year.

The PRM numbers have held fast although the data was not available at the time of the meeting to compare 2017 with 2016. 4,763 passengers have requested assistance on departure from ABZ YTD and 4,727 passengers arriving in ABZ have requested assistance, providing a total number of assistance requests as 9,490. The busiest months have been May, June, July and August.

A slide showing the breakdown of PRM requests was shown which clearly highlights that WCHR (Wheelchair required to bottom of aircraft steps or from bottom of aircraft steps through the airport) remains the most popular type of request at 56.3%. This is followed by WCHS (cannot manage aircraft steps and requires use of ambulift to get on to plane but can walk to seat in plane) at 32.1% and then WCHC (requires assistance into seat on aircraft) at 6.8%.

We continue to see an increase in the number of DPNA requests being made. DPNA passengers are classed as self-reliant with an intellectual disability requiring assistance. It is worth noting that some passengers that would be classified as DPNA’s have approached the airport directly for assistance (provided by Terminal team) or have travelled ‘independently’ through the airport with a lanyard (introduced this year) to highlight to staff that assistance could potentially be required.

A summary of complaints, compliments and enquiries was presented and a discussion took place regarding the nature of some of these and the action taken in response. 17 complaints have been recorded as PRM related YTD and when this is put into perspective with the number of passengers assisted this equates to 0.0012% of all PRM passengers or 1.5/2 per month.

2. Presentation on the Security Threat

Robert Horsburgh, Security Co-ordinator at Aberdeen International Airport presented to the group on the various terrorist related incidents that have taken place over the years and how they have influenced current Security procedures and protocols. RH explained the compliance requirements in relation to assistance passengers and answered questions from the group on Security related matters.

3. Terminal Transformation Update

FB presented various slides on the Terminal Transformation project and brought the group up to date with the progress. FB confirmed that the new International Arrivals area was completed in May of this year providing 50% more space for passengers and a reclaim belt twice the size of the previous one. On the 1st July the new Northern Lights Executive Lounge opened to passengers and it has been a big success. Finally, in mid-July the new UK Arrivals reclaim area was opened completing the first phase of 3 of the £20 Terminal Transformation project.

Phase 2 of the project, which includes a new Security Search and World Duty Free retail shop, has already begun with the target date of summer 2018 for completion. The commencement of this phase of the project necessitated the move of the Assistance area to its new home adjacent to the Menzies Ticket desk, as the entrance to the new Security search is where the Assistance area used to be. Many points were raised about the new Assistance area and are included later in the minutes.

4. 2017 Activity/Progress

**Launch of Lanyards for passengers with hidden disabilities**

At the end of June we rolled out the new lanyards and got a great response from the general public on our social media channels. The lanyards are available for anyone with any type of hidden disability although they have proved most popular for passengers who are on the autistic spectrum. The lanyards are available at the Assistance area on request or from Phionna McInnes at Me Too Magazine.

In addition to the launch of the lanyards we have been promoting our familiarisation tours of the airport to help passengers become more comfortable with the environment prior to the day of travel. Similar to the lanyards these tours are proving popular and beneficial for the families involved which is great to hear.

**Social Media reaction to assistance provided**

On the 11th July one of our passengers posted a review of the assistance his family had received passing through the airport, complementing the help at check in and at the departure gates, but in particular at Security with their autistic son.

We have never before had such a reaction to a social media post; 69,000 ‘Reactions’, over 3,000 ‘Comments’ and over 7,000 ‘Shares’. This was a really positive reflection of our staff and proved that our staff can help in challenging situations.

**National Autistic Society (NAS) launched World Autism Awareness Week at the airport.**

Back in March NAS were in attendance at the airport to promote World Autism Awareness week and provided staff and passengers with the opportunity to experience life from the perspective of a person living with autism using Virtual Reality headsets. This event helped generate some more awareness of the issues that are faced by people on the autistic spectrum at busy places like an airport and an understanding of the things that can be done to help them.

**Training provided jointly by Friendly Access (FA) and Me Too Magazine! (M2M) on ‘Understanding Autism and the Environmental Issues’**

In May, Glyn from FA and Phionna from M2M facilitated 2 training sessions on Autism Awareness for airport staff members. They were joined by Euan Hood, who is diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome, and he provided a thoroughly enjoyable presentation. Euan was really effective in getting across to all participants the key issues and challenges faced by people on the spectrum, using his humour to good effect…despite the distractions of the planes outside!!

**2016/7 CAA Airport Accessibility Report**

In August, the Civil Aviation Authority published its second Airport Accessibility Report which evaluates the performance of 30 UK airports against a framework developed following extensive dialogue with industry and disability groups.

The framework assesses how long passengers have to wait for assistance, customer satisfaction levels and how much consultation airports have undertaken with organisations who represent those with disabilities.

This report covers the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017. Aberdeen International Airport was ranked as ‘good’ recognizing the high level of service being provided and the consultation taking place with disability groups and organisations.

We were ranked as ‘taking steps’ in the first report so it is clear that we are moving in a positive direction. We are aiming for ‘very good’ status next year and believe this is achievable given the contacts and foundations we have already put in place.

**Sensory Awareness Training**

On 30th August, North East Sensory Services provided Sensory Awareness training which focused on awareness of sensory loss and how it impacts on people. The training helped provide more confidence and knowledge in assisting people through the airport.

5. Latest Updates

**PRM Contract**

G4S have been successful in their re-tender for the PRM contract. The new contract is for 3 years from October 2017.

**Loganair/Flybe both operating LSI and KOI flights**

Flybe and Loganair are now competing on the LSI and KOI flights with Flybe entering into a franchise agreement with Eastern Airways and Loganair now operating independently. In the short term passengers are benefitting from cheaper air fares and greater capacity on the routes.

**Upbeat magazine**

A suggestion was made in previous forums that the airports work on hidden disabilities could be promoted in the quarterly airport Upbeat magazine. The next edition (autumn) will feature an article which will hopefully promote greater awareness.

**Familiarisation for Guide Dogs for the Blind.**

Two days previous to the meeting familiarisation of the airport was provided for some puppies that are potentially being trained up as Guide Dogs. This involved going through Security and on to a plane. These familiarisation sessions are now taking place every 3 months.

**Upcoming talk to Stoma patients**

On the 23rd September Robert Horsburgh delivered a presentation to SecuriCare Medical Ltd, a home delivery and nursing service for patients who have a Stoma, and discussed Airport related matters focusing on Security in particular.

**Presentation to Access Panel.**

On 1st November we are due to attend Aberdeenshire Access Panel meeting and present an update on the airport developments.

6. Members Update and Discussion

**Relocation of Assistance area landside**

The new location and appearance of the assistance area was mentioned by several forum members. There is a general concern that the area is not well enough signposted (hard for passengers to locate it) and that people waiting in this area are too exposed to their surroundings including noise etc. FB explained that more work is required in this area to make it more comfortable and accessible. This will include a new desk for the Assistance team, new screens and better demarcation of the area. A suggestion was made for the use of acoustic boards due to the noise in the area.

It was mentioned that the area gives the impression that it was an ‘after thought’ and it adds weight to the argument that consultation with Assistance groups should be made when designing an area like this. FB advised that the airport would look to set up a working group to review the set-up of this area.

**New UK Arrivals Reclaim area**

The point was raised that it is a long walk for passengers to get to the new UK Arrivals reclaim especially if they have arrived off an aircraft parked on the rear stands which the Kirkwall and Sumburgh flights more often than not do. Passengers would perhaps benefit from knowing the walking distance involved prior to attempting the journey (at the gate entrance itself?) – The airport website also needs to be updated with new walking distances. It was also suggested that more wheelchairs should be available near Gates 6-12 so passengers could use them if they think they need them (those who have not booked assistance)

Regarding the walking distances the point was made that there are a lack of handrails on the route to the reclaim area.

Suggestion to have Assistance Seating (such as the ones at the assistance area, gate 10 and lower departure lounge) in the reclaim area.

**Orkney and Shetland**

The point was made that positive news stories about the airport have not spread to the Northern Isles and that there is an opportunity to do this through local access panels, Voluntary Action Orkney as well as the Orcadian and Shetland times.

**Compliments for the staff**

Members wanted to highlight their appreciation of the efforts of airport staff in providing assistance.

**Disconnect during booking process**

It was mentioned that at times there seems to be a disconnect between travel agents and airlines/airport when booking assistance.

**Oxygen supplies onboard aircraft.**

Question over which airlines are able to provide oxygen as having difficulty between Aberdeen and Stavanger. Suggestions made by other forum members as to who could help.

**Welcome App – neatbox**

The suggestion was made that a Welcome App could be utilised by the airport as a way of improving the service that we provide. This will be looked at further.

The meeting was closed at 1215hrs. The next forum will take place in March 2018 with the date to be confirmed.