Accessibility Forum Minutes 13/03/2025

**Introductions to the meeting with attendees**

* Aaron, Andy, Emma and Tara – Newcastle Airport
* Dave & Allison – Joint Accessibility Forum chair
* Scott Davis & Dianne Wilson – Customers who advise airports on their assisted travel team
* Helen Mayne – Alzheimer’s society
* Julie Bradford- North East Autism society

On Teams meeting Introductions:

* Emily Kilby – Consumer Policy Advisor from the CAA
* Baroness Grey-Thompson

**Baroness Grey-Thompson**

* Doing a report through the minister group about disabled people flying set up by the department for transport. Meeting with Airports UK, Airlines and the users.
* It’s not full of case studies with horror stories its about solutions; training, batteries, etc.
* Spoke about equipment being lost, damaged and passengers getting left on a plane for ages.

**Runway Project**

* £17 million pounds project currently underway but coming to an end this month.

**Staff Lane – PRM upgrade**

* Upgraded so that customers assisted by our teams can be taken through the PRM (Staff Lane)
* Awaiting the X-ray to be delivered and installed. Then conduct staff training and then introducing staff through using it and then our PRM customers.

**Commercial Outlets**

* Bar 11 – completely refurbed
* Greggs – been extended landside
* JD Sports – Moved into a bigger unit
* Boots – full refurb
* WHSmiths – full refurb

**Gate 19 UKBF Corridor**

* Corridor straight from gate 19 with a direct route to border force.

**Gate 19 information board**

* Screens introduced into Gate 19 area for those hard of hearing
* Gate 19 gets very busy and so the screens show which flight is now assisting and illuminates in green

**Other Projects**

* Pier flooring – WHSmiths has gone so flooring is on hold for that area
* Gate 10 – better queue management for the flow of passengers

**Awards**

Passengers have named Newcastle Airport as one of the best in Europe for providing exceptional customer service.

Best Airport in Europe, in the 2 to 5 million passenger category, at the prestigious Airport Service Quality (ASQ) Awards.

**Break from the presentation for the terminal tour and walkaround**

* Review Chair to be added into the start of the security search area for passengers to sit down whilst removing boots, etc.

**Break for lunch and presentation continued**

* PRM increases in 2024 +26.9% increase from 2023. Expected into 2025 +23% increase.

**Aims for this year**

* 5 new duty allocators going through training to provide structure and two on shift to split the workload to relieve some pressure
* Evidence for ACI Accessibility
* Guide dogs and sight guided training and awareness sessions

**Discussion around the table:**

* Alison had a good experience through our security search area being courteous.
* Discussion about NCL airport being all inhouse – Passenger Services, Security, Cleaning. Directors and upper management getting stuck in with assisting passengers if required.

Points –

* every passenger the same experience. Doing away with the term special assistance and calling it assisted travel. To create the same experience as everyone else.
* Unprebooked PRMS
* removal of the fast track lane for PRMs and the anxiety that can be caused for those with hidden disability if there are queues in security. - Assistance tailored to the person once needs are identified at assistance desk
* Spoken about the bypass corridor in the security search area and that she has passed onto the dementia patients about this to avoid bright lights, smells, sparkly floor etc.
* everyone who needs assistance to register with our assistance desk. Whether that be for a sunflower lanyard or a wheelchair.
* Aim to set up a visit for Alzheimer’s society members/Family’s
* Discussion around IATA SSR Codes and need for more information
* website should be nearer to the homepage although Andy and Aaron discuss’ it is on the drop down on the homepage -Website to be upgraded
* Discussion regarding passengers not requiring assistance in NCL but may require assistance in large hub airport
* Possibility of Movement of sensory area

**Actions:**

* Review the possibility of a seat landside to be added into the security search area.
* Assisted trave location on website to be reviewed
* To raise at AOC about airline partners joining the accessibility forums.

Thank you for your attendance, we look forward to seeing you on the next one.

Next Meeting Proposed Date:

20th November 2025 