# **Minutes: Liverpool Airport Accessibility Committee (LAAC) Forum**

Tuesday 19 April 2022 13:00

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| **Location:** | | **Cavern Suite, Liverpool Airport and online via Microsoft Teams** | | | | | | |
| **Attendees** | | | | | | | | |
| **Name** | | | **Company** | | **Name** | | **Company** | |
| **Andy Wright** | | | Chair, L.A.A.C. | | **Paul Staples** | | Director of Airport Operations, LPL | |
| **Debbie Lacy-May** | | | Head of Terminal Operations, LPL | | **Christina Smith** | | Customer Services Executive, LPL | |
| **Julie Burns** | | | General Manager ABM, LPL | | **Leanne McLaughlin** | | Operations Manager, EasyJet | |
| **Pat Broster** | | | Dementia Action Alliance | | **Nigel + Hazel Morley** | | IAS Support | |
| **Helen Gillan** | | | NHS Southport | | **Sarah Oldnall** | | The Brain Charity | |
| **Julie Simpson** | | | Autism Adventures | |  | |  | |
| **Dean + Gary Simpson-Humphreys** | | | | | Spinal Injuries Association | | | |
| **Apologies** | | | | | | | | |
| **Emma Hotchkiss** | | | RNID | | **Stephen Joiner** | | Guide Dog Service User | |
| **Stephen Cronin** | | | Spinal Injuries Association | | **Carrie-Ann Lightley** | | AccessAble | |
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| **Welcome and introductions** |
| **Andy** welcomed attendees to the Liverpool Airport Accessibility Committee Forum, which was held in the Cavern Suite at the airport, with some members joining the meeting online. **Andy** confirmed that there were a few apologies for the meeting (please see above) as well as some new members, due to staff changes/promotions within attending organisations. He then completed a round the table introduction to all members and guests.  There was only one outstanding action from the previous meeting as, due to Covid, the purpose of the last Forum had simply been to update members on recent airport activities.  The point in question concerned the continuation of the awareness campaign to the airlines and other stakeholders at the airport, of the Sunflower lanyard scheme and the dementia awareness campaign.  **Christina** reminded the committee that prior to Covid, EasyJet staff had participated in specific hidden disability training, incorporating dementia and autism awareness. This had been provided by the airport and was found to be very beneficial.  **Christina** then advised that current PRM, Security and Ground Handling refresher staff training now incorporated hidden disability awareness modules. But as many airlines and airport partners had unfortunately lost experienced colleagues during the pandemic, with the increase to travel restrictions during November. Unfortunately, non-essential staff training had suffered at that time. However, following the lifting of restrictions, new hire teams were now working throughout the airport, having recently received awareness training for their new roles. So, the airport plan was now to gradually roll out the awareness campaign to all new staff and those who had not originally received it.  In addition, John Walsh, Stomawise had kindly offered to host Ostomy awareness sessions to new staff and **Julie** from Autism Together also said she would be happy to work with the airport to further support their staff training.  **Andy** then introduced Paul Staples, who provided a business update on recent activities at the airport. |
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| **General Business Overview** |
| **Paul** started with a re-cap of the damage that had been felt by the aviation sector as a result of the pandemic. Explaining that there had been an almost overnight cessation of flights from Liverpool to Italy at the beginning, shortly followed by more and more flights being cancelled over time. However, Liverpool airport did take the decision to remain open, in order to safeguard the vital route between Liverpool and the Isle of Man in support of the medical transfer flights that continued to operate. As well as providing a vital logistics link for the supply of PPE.  **Paul** then went on to explain more about the direct financial impact to the airport of the Covid crisis. Which had resulted in the redeployment of staff where possible, in order to minimise redundancies and retain as many experienced and skilled members of staff as possible. Which was not only the right thing to do, but it had also enabled the airport to remain operational during such challenging times. Thereby hopefully putting Liverpool airport in a stronger position to recover more quickly than others, following the pandemic.  **Paul** continued, advising how the airport had seen a rapid increase in passenger numbers following the recent lifting of Covid restrictions. As well as being able to announce the introduction of a number of new routes from Liverpool, including 4 new weekly flights to Frankfurt being operated by Lufthansa.  The airport was also pleased to announce that they will be developing a new cargo operation and business jet facility to facilitate VIP and executive passengers.  **Paul** explained how new investment had been made into improving passenger experience at the airport, with a £5 million facelift to Level 3 in the Departure Lounge. As well as a further £2 million investment into new retail developments.  He finished by reinforcing the airport’s determination to focus on passengers who require additional assistance when they travel, as well as a desire to further improve on the Civil Aviation Authorities recent Accessibility report, in which Liverpool airport had received a ***Good*** rating. |

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| |  | | --- | | **ABM Service Performance Update** | |
| **Julie** introduced herself and then highlighted ABM`s performance data over the last six months. She explained that despite the obvious operational difficulties her team had encountered during the pandemic, their performance overall had been good.  **Julie** then summarised ABM’s current Covid related health and safety measures, which included an initiative called Safe2day, where registered staff receive a twice weekly email to record their health status. As well as having access to on-site lateral flow tests, following the removal of the free NHS tests. In addition, there were now SWOP (Safe Working Observation Programme) audits being carried out to ensure safe use and operation of passenger assistance equipment such as Aisle-chairs, Ambulifts and Aviramps amongst others.  **Julie** then shared with the forum, some recent passenger testimonials which were very positive and highlighted examples of service over and above. Before highlighting some of the current difficulties ABM were experiencing with forecasting anticipated passengers requiring assistance, due to the lack of historic data. As well as the ongoing issues with both staff sickness (due to Covid) and recruitment, and security pass applications for newly recruited staff.  Further information can be found in the attached document - **ABM Accessibility Forum April 2022.**  **Dean** asked if assistance with personal care was available for wheelchair users flying from Liverpool airport.  **Julie** confirmed that assistance is available for passengers to be escorted to and from the toilet or the Changing Places facility, but personal care needs needed to be carried out by carers/relatives. |

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| **EasyJet presentation** |
| **Leanne**, EasyJet then introduced herself to the forum before providing a brief overview on EasyJet’s recent challenges, as well future plans following the pandemic.  She explained as with most airports and airlines, the emphasis right now was working to recruit and train the increasing numbers of new staff required. As understandably, many had unfortunately been made redundant during the Covid pandemic.  The airline policy as far as Covid measures were concerned was now more relaxed, in line with government guidelines. Nevertheless, full cleansing protocols were still being adhered to, both for staff and within the airline cabin. Although masks were now only required to be worn in the cabin, if the arrival destination insisted upon it e.g. Greece (at that time).  However, on a more positive note, **Leanne** said EasyJet had already seen considerable increases to passenger numbers and they were expected this growth to continue, if not increase in the foreseeable future. |

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| **Security update** |
| **Debbie** introduced herself and provided an update to the forum members on Security, explaining how Wilson James (the company subcontracted by LPL to manage the airport Security facility) were running a number of new courses for recently employed staff, as well as refresher training for those who had been furloughed. These include disability awareness training and hidden disability modules.  **Debbie** explained that unfortunately because of the pandemic and the immediate focus on getting the airport back up to speed as quickly as possible, her aspiration to fully review the staff training modules had been forced to take a backseat. But she was still keen to look at ways to enhance the content and level of training delivered to all the staff and service providers throughout the airport.  **Nigel** then raised some concerns which had been voiced by fellow service users, who have travelled through other airports recently, where they had been taken away for a private search. This had happened before they were given an opportunity to collect their personal effects from the security tray, which meant some items had subsequently been left unattended. **Debbie** assured him that Liverpool airport’s core Security team, who had worked throughout the pandemic, were fully aware of the correct procedures in such instances and consequently this should never happen at Liverpool. However, she would highlight this example to the Wilson James’s supervisory and training teams, to ensure all colleagues were fully up to date with operating processes and procedures. |

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| **A.O.B.** |
| **Pat** was keen to know if committee members had been involved with other accessible transport agendas locally and if so, what were they.  **Julie** said her charity was assisting a local rail company and would be happy to discuss further with **Pat** after the meeting.  **Andy** said that this would be an interesting topic for further discussion at the next forum.  The meeting closed with **Christina** and **Andy** thanking all the forum members for their continued support, especially through such recent difficult times. Saying the airport would like to host the next forum at the airport in the autumn. When it was hoped members would also be able to conduct a familiarisation visit of the terminal, in full operation. **Christina** provided a handout to committee members including details of passenger feedback and results from a recent CAA survey.  **Date for next LAAC Forum - Tuesday, 1 November 2022** |