

Minutes London Luton Airport Accessibility Forum (LLAAF)

Date	Thursday 04 th of March 2021 13:00
Location	The meeting was conducted online via Microsoft Teams due to the Covid crisis

Attendees	
Name	Company
Andy Wright	Committee Chair
Denise Hobbs	Accessibility Manager - London Luton Airport & LLAAF Joint Chair
Annlouise Taylor	Alzheimer's Society
Amy Gavin-Birch	Autism Bedfordshire
Milton Rae	Royal National Institute for Deaf People
Carol Barraclough	Spinal Injuries Association
Peta Barratt	Spinal Injuries Association
Siobhan Meade	Guide Dogs for the Blind
Helen Fleet	Guide Dogs for the Blind
Megan Spencer Rigby	DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit)
Rebecca Star	DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit)
Komal Jaleel	DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit)
Nick Gallé	Wilson James
Apologies	
Daniel Churchman	Disability Resource Centre
Libby Herbert	Colostomy UK
Dr Rita Egan	Luton Passenger Services Committee
Abigail Burrell-Rann	JDRF

1 - Welcome, Introductions and update on recent activities at the airport

Andy welcomed attendees to the **London Luton Airport Accessibility Forum (LLAAF)**, which was held online due to the ongoing Covid crisis. **Andy** provided a brief overview about the purpose and format of the airport forum for the benefit of the new attendees and guests.

Denise then ran through the agenda and introduced the representatives from DART (Direct Air-Rail Transit) and Wilson James to the forum.

2 - DART (Direct Air- Rail Transit) Presentation

Megan Spencer-Rigby, DART, commenced with a PowerPoint presentation (copy attached) which incorporated a couple of videos highlighting the route and building progress to date.

Links for video footage can be found at:

- <https://youtu.be/5Mufx-8AX6w>
- <https://vimeo.com/518205900/4dd3a59781>

Megan explained to the group about the various stakeholders involved in the cross organisational group whose primary role will be to deliver a fully automated driverless system over approximately 2.1 km, connecting the airport's terminal building to London Luton Parkway station in approximately 4 minutes.

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Megan explained that there will be two stations, being DART Parkway and DART Central Station. Having already consulted with, amongst others, the Disability Resource Centre - a member of the LLAAF - there are already plans to incorporate a Quiet Zone into Parkway Station, tactile paving to guide the visually impaired, and an Assisted Travel waiting area into Central Station.

Testing and commissioning of the trains will start in April 2021, with stations becoming operational by the end of January/February 2022. Trains should then enter into live service by late February/March 2022.

DART will be forming working groups, which will include members of the disabled community in order to ensure that both stations and trains meet expectation and are fully accessible.

Initial feedback indicated that the gap between the train carriage and the platform was expected to be no more than 25 mm. **Andy** asked both **Carol** and **Peta** whether they felt this would cause any issues for a wheelchair user, or perhaps a mother with a pushchair for example. It was agreed that this distance should present few issues for such passengers. **Carol** did warn of possible issues for a traveller in terms of the placement of their walking aids or for visually impaired people, their long cane.

3 - Wilson James presentation

Nick Gallé, Wilson James (WJ) - the newly contracted PRM Assistance provider since 01st Feb 2021 - began his PowerPoint presentation (attached) with an overview of the company, including their areas of operation and clients.

Nick continued by providing details of WJ's rollout plan since the company assumed control of the PRM contract.

Nick explained that all of the Assistance Staff now working at the airport had been inducted via a number of *Welcome* sessions and also had received training on the new company assistance software. He advised that all new staff members would also receive new QNUK level 2 & 3 training qualifications - *Supporting Passengers in Assisted Services Environment* - and a new uniform.

Andy then asked what percentage of the original Assistance Staff were currently working at the airport and when did WJ anticipate passengers would want to start flying again?

Nick advised that current staffing levels were running at approximately 25-30% of the previous peak period rotas, but it was still difficult to forecast when things were likely to return to *normal*.

So, **Andy** asked about the company's plans for future recruitment.

Nick said that WJ currently have 450 staff from other airports on furlough, so could utilise these resources should it become necessary at short notice. In addition, **Nick** explained that he was already in discussion with a recruitment agency, planning for the inevitable increase in demand.

Andy then asked what has the culture change been like since WJ took over, and how had the staff adapted to the new technology?

Nick said early signs were positive, but he had been surprised by the quality of the previous company's uniform and equipment standards, as well as the quality of the staff rest areas. So, staff had already been impressed by the undertakings made by WJ in this regard. **Nick** also said WJ has a very capable IT system called Ozion, which can provide more data than the previous system and is therefore favoured by a number of the airlines. As it can often demonstrate more accurately the reason for aircraft delays. Equally staff feedback had been positive so far.

Andy asked who will be conducting the training at Luton airport and is there a default company position as far as assisting / moving a WCHC Passenger to and from their airline seat?

Nick advised that WJ has a trainer based at Luton, where staff training will be conducted. Who will be supported by a further 3 trainers at Gatwick and 3 trainers based at Heathrow. **Nick** also confirmed that all Assistance Staff are encouraged to interact with a PRM to determine their preferred method of transfer, following consultation. Be that sling, slide board, hoist - if appropriate - or manual lift.

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Andy then proposed enriching WJ's existing training with volunteer service users from the forum's charities and disability organisations. Forum members said they would be happy to discuss this suggestion with their service users to see whether they would be interested in offering their support.

3 - and future LLAAF scheduled meeting dates

Denise finished the meeting with a summary PowerPoint presentation (attached), highlighting the airport's recent downturn in passenger numbers as a result of the Covid crisis. As well as an update on the CAA annual review process, an update on the toilet alarm system installed within the accessible toilets, and future considerations awaiting financial approval.

Milton offered his services to inspect the Hearing Loops which were soon due for annual inspection, whilst the airport was quieter.

Following the meeting, **Ann Louise** emailed asking whether LLA was considering using 3D mapping within the airport, to provide customers with a means of familiarising/preparing themselves before arriving at the airport?

Denise confirmed that she liked the idea and would consider 3D mapping as a future project, subject to budget approval. But given the current situation, right now would probably not be an ideal time to seek financial sign off. Once passenger figures increase, and building works, including the DART project, are completed with all the shop units reoccupied again, she would feel more confident approaching the Board. Especially as a completed and fully occupied terminal would create a more effective optical image for the 3D mapping process.

Denise Also confirmed that a project like 3D Mapping will probably be an integrated project with other sections of LLA i.e., estates / commercial / marketing and that it would also need to be cleared by security as well. But will definitely look into it in the future.

To close off the meeting **Denise** and **Andy** thanked everybody for attending and advised that the LLAAF Committee would next meet on **Thursday, 10 June 2021** for a catch up. Further information will follow in due course.