

Minutes London Luton Airport Accessibility Forum (LLAAF)

Thursday 11 September 2025, Terminal building, Luton Airport, 11:00

Attendees	
Andy Wright - LLAAF Committee Chair	Denise Hobbs - Accessibility Manager, LTN
Tom Emery - Regional Director Aviation, Wilson James	Liz Boadella-Burton - Head Customer Experience, Wilson James
Emily Kilby - CAA	Phil Rutter & Marion Burchell - Sigh Loss Council
Chris Lewis - Colostomy UK	Jo Joy - Alzheimer's Society
Ann Munroe - Luton Council	Amanda Patmore - Luton Council
Gemma Malins - Autism Bedfordshire	Lewie Gentilella - Autism Bedfordshire
Peta Barratt - Spinally injured traveller	Mary Doyle - Disability Etiquette trainer
Nicholas Orpin - Hearing Dogs for Deaf People	Maxine Clare - Hearing Dogs for Deaf People

Welcome and Introductions
<p>Throughout the year the LLAAF committee members have been involved in a number of airport initiatives with the sole purpose of improving the quality of the <i>assisted</i> passenger journey. As well as creating an environment to promote greater self-confidence and independence. So that for those guests who would rather travel throughout the airport terminal independently without support from the Assisted Travel department, if they are able, they should be supported to do so. Thereby, the LLAAF members have worked with Denise Hobbs and colleagues to establish preferred routes and provide greater information to empower and encourage self-mobilisation.</p> <p>Therefore, Andy and Denise decided that the September 25 forum meeting should begin with an opportunity for the committee members to undertake the airport journey themselves, by using some of the recently designed literature to guide and support them. Whilst undertaking a series of reviews/assessments of many of the new retail, food and beverage units that had recently been opened prior to the summer. Before culminating their journey in the newly completed Assisted Travel lounge. Where much guidance and support from the LLAAF members had helped determine the final design and finish of the lounge.</p> <p>So, on the morning of Thursday 11 September Andy and Denise welcomed the LLAAF members to the London Luton Airport information desk, just inside the terminal. Where the forum members gathered to meet with Denise's airport colleagues and receive their instructions, prior to their assessment reviews. Divided into smaller groups the members were given independent journey cards to follow, along with a list of different selected retail outlets (19 units in total) to conduct their various inspection and observation tasks. Before reuniting with their colleagues in the <i>Assisted Travel Lounge</i>, which they hadn't seen since the completion.</p>

Airport Familiarisation Tour & Audit
<p>The members then undertook the Security process making observations and taking notes accordingly. Before continuing their airport journey by heading towards the International Departure Lounge (IDL) in order to locate their respective retail units to review. Before heading to the newly opened <i>Assisted Travel Lounge</i>.</p> <p>Each member had been handed an individual audit sheet which included a number of questions, as detailed below...</p>

Is there a clear and accessible route around the facility?	Table Heights - are these accessible for all users?
Seating - is the furniture accessible/moveable/usable?	Static Furniture - is the furniture accessible/usable?
Sunflower Lanyard - Are staff aware of the meaning behind the sunflower lanyard?	Mirrors - are these accessible for all users?
Shelving or clothes rails - are these accessible?	Shelving or clothes rails - is there available assistance to support if items are out of reach?
Hazards/Obstructions/Barriers? Provide details: Induction Loop/Hearing Loop available?	Check-out counter tops - are these accessible to all users? Staff awareness/Training? Ask the team??

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The forum members then conducted their respective observations/assessments before joining their colleagues in the Assisted Travel Lounge. The visit coincided with the Assisted Travel Lounge opening day which provided the perfect opportunity for an official 'ribbon cutting' and a few words by LLA's CEO Alberto Martin along with a photo of all the forum members whose insight, advice and feedback was invaluable in creating a service user led design. As a thank you and a sign of appreciation, the forum members were then taken for lunch courtesy of the airport.

Following lunch, **Andy** and **Denise** thanked all the LLAAF members for their participation and feedback during the earlier observations/assessments which was explained would then be collated and summarised. Following which **Denise** would arrange a follow-up session online on Wednesday, 15 October 2025 to discuss the observations and outcomes in more detail. As well as provide additional information about the airport's recent performance, including recent customer satisfaction responses, and next steps.

Wednesday, 15 October 2025 Microsoft Teams meeting 14:00 Airport performance

Andy opened the meeting before handing over to **Denise** to discuss in more detail the airport's recent performance and to review actions raised in the last LLA Accessibility forum.

Denise explained that LLA had seen a 10.65% increase in the number of flights being attended by the assistance service year to date. Whilst total passenger numbers had not yet recovered back to 2019 numbers, the actual number of guests requiring assistance at the airport had now increased considerably by over 37%. The top 5 destinations for assisted travel guests were similar to last year, with Spain being number one. Followed by UK domestic flights, Ireland and Poland. But unlike 2024 when Turkey was the fifth largest destination, that destination had now been replaced by Portugal. With two new countries being added to the Luton airport portfolio being Finland and Georgia.

The ECAC results had also been positive for 2025 (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 consistent performance throughout the year (further information can be found in the accompanying presentation pack).

There had also been improvements to satisfaction survey results, with last month's score exceeding 4.5 being a 0.08 percentage increase on previous months.

Feedback received in the LLA Accessibility Forum survey which was completed after the last LLA Accessibility Forum, **Denise** then confirmed that the airport had now actioned the below suggestions /feedback received within it:-

- signed off on new Terms of Reference for the LLAAF members and their respective charities and disability organisations. Meaning that for attendance and input into future forums and related projects, LLAAF members would receive expenses and a fee/donation towards their organisation.
- **Andy** then added that he had secured a new member for the LLAAF, being Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, in order to broaden the range of pan- disability representation.

Assisted Travel Lounge and retail assessment feedback

Denise then shared the feedback from the recent airport visit with the members. As well as talking through the development and construction thereafter of the Assisted Travel Lounge. Saying that most of the items on the original wish list put forward by LLAAF members, had been added already or were in the process of being actioned. For example, she said for the sensory area, space had now been identified and sensory related items had now been ordered. However, for the subtle/dimmer lighting, this had proven to be a problem currently, due to health and safety considerations. Overall, the lounge had been well received already by guests, with a number of positive write-ups in various local and national media publications having followed.

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Other observations made on the day of the LLAAF visit, included the Assisted Travel Lounge appearing to be extremely busy already. Causing concerns about there being sufficient space in the future, especially during peak periods.

Denise confirmed that following the opening of the Assisted Travel Lounge, that a few rows of airport seating had been removed from the lounge following observations that a number of guests chose to remain seated within their own/airport wheelchairs and that by removing some airport seats had created more space for the volume of guests using the lounge.

There were a few other observations surrounding layout of the toilet roll dispensers in the Assisted Travel Lounge, Changing Places Facility as well as airport wayfinding and signage to better indicate the location of certain facilities. It was agreed that all of these will be reviewed and adjusted accordingly over time if necessary, and when more guest feedback could be obtained following usage.

Denise also mentioned that due to the Assisted Travel Lounge being busy in peak times of the day, as witnessed by forum members on the day of the site visit, that there is still a separate quiet space available, located next to departure gate 17 for guests who may require a quiet space to regulate themselves during their airport transit.

Denise then went on to summarise the observations and feedback that were raised during the retail unit assessment. Which included, lighting and touchscreens causing glare in various locations around the IDL. In many of the food and beverage units, the lower accessible tables were often at the back of the restaurant rather than the front. In a number of shops there were bulky items adjacent or overhanging aisles, often blocking or narrowing passageways. And only one store had a hearing loop. Many staff members in the units displayed an understanding of disability awareness/ etiquette training but this was explained by some staff that this was self-taught and not necessarily trained by their retail outlets. **Denise** explained that following the site visit, that she had shared the assessment feedback provided by the forum members to the LLA commercial team who will be reviewing all feedback received and seeing how it can help make changes to future tenders with LLA being able to share expectations from stores looking to come into LLA, and hopes to share an update as to what actions have been taken at the next LLA Accessibility Forum.

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There were no further points raised, or questions asked by Forum members.

So, **Andy** and **Denise** thanked the members for their attendance and contributions to what had been a very beneficial exercise, in critiquing and self-testing the airport's new self-mobilisation offering. Along with assessing/reviewing many of the units within the International Departure Lounge and the new Assisted Travel lounge.

Dates for next year's meetings are detailed below...

19th March 2026 & 17th September 2026