



LONDON GATWICK

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Independent Gatwick Accessibility Panel (IGAP)

19th July 2024 – Destinations Ops Boardroom (8th Floor) and Online

Note: this meeting was due to include a terminal visit, but due to the global IT outage this was postponed to a later date and many members attended online.

Attendees:

IGAP

Ann Frye (Chair)
Sue Sharp
Ross Hovey
Neil Betteridge (Online)
Robert Morgan (Online until 1pm)
Libby Herbert (Online)
Daniel Cadey (Online)
Sophie Grand (Online)
Charlotte McMillan (Online)

CAA

Emily Kilby

GAL

Anna-Ruth Cockerham
Asher Prower (for item 1)
Stephen Mckay (Online for item 1)

PAG

Samantha Williams (Online)
Sheila Plant (Online)

Wilson James (Service Provider)

Aimme Economou (Online for item 1)

Other

Amy Waumsley, AccessAble (for items 3 and 4)
Janet Jones, AccessAble (for items 3 and 4)
Nuala O'Sullivan, Mima (Online for item 1)
Rosie Smith, Mima (Online for item 1)

Apologies:

Pete Coombes (GAL)
Nick Williams (GAL)
Liz Boadella Burton (WJ)

Kamran Mallick (IGAP)
Sophia Warner (IGAP)
Geraldine Lundy (IGAP)



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Minutes:

1. South Terminal Departure Lounge Refurbishment

The South Terminal Departure Lounge Refurbishment project provides a presentation on the plans for the refurbishment, including the South Terminal Assistance Lounge. Details are available in the slide deck and pre-read available to members. Comments from the panel included:

Orientation Zone

- The use of advertising in the orientation zone may be distracting from the wayfinding. The project will feed this back to Marketing.

Assistance Lounge

- The use of the word “privacy” for the design of the assistance lounge prompted discussion from panel members. Members were concerned that the lounge would be hidden away, and that disabled people will not feel like they are part of the main assistance lounge and that it will not be easy to find.
- The assistance lounge will maintain its location in the centre of the upper level of the departure lounge, however, it’s current design leads to a “fishbowl effect” where people feel like they are being stared at by people at the nearby restaurants and seating.
- The new design should improve sightlines to the assistance desk, while improving the look and feel and the sense of being too visible.
- One panel member mentions another airport has an assistance area which has no windows and is out of the way, this proposed design is better as it is central and more open.
- The discussion on the location of the assistance lounge and how it can make disabled people using the service feel isolated or hidden prompts a suggestion from members to rename the service to remove the word “special” from “special assistance”. Anna-Ruth Cockerham will raise this and get back to the panel.
- Members like the use of timber and greenery in the space which is in line with Design for the Mind guidance however they query whether the planting is real. The project intends to use a mix of real and fake planting as in the North Terminal.
- Members question the inspiration images in the slide deck for the space, as the seating in the pictures looks uncomfortable and there are shiny floors. The project will replace the floors in the assistance lounge and mattify it.
- There is another project to replace the seating in the North Terminal assistance lounge which may influence the furniture choice in this space.



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- Panel members highlight the need for mixed seating (different heights, armrests, etc.) including power points in the assistance lounge.
- The project agrees to come back before the designs are finalised for this space.

Kids Zone

- Panel members question the proposed location for the moved Kids Zone as it would be close to a walking route towards many gates, which could cause issues due to loud noise or children running around. For safeguarding purposes, it would also be better if a children's area were more secluded. Members would prefer a different location.
- Panel members highlight the need to make the play area accessible for both disabled children and adults. The current area does not look very accessible for disabled children and there is limited seating with visibility of the area.
- Panel members discuss the impact of not having a play area. It is well-utilised, and there would need to be a balance of the impact of children not having a play area to use and potentially running around other spaces if it is not available. Members recognise the need for the space but need to review the location and design.
- The project will bring back a design for the Kids Zone, taking the panel's comments into consideration.
- Panel members highlight good practice elsewhere. IKEA has a good design where the areas are enclosed and other people cannot see in. Heathrow also has a soft play.

Greenery

- The project agrees to show a picture of the proposed green wall for the lift shafts.

Seating

- The panel members discuss the spider seating options in the North Terminal departure lounge which are hard for people to get around and can pose an obstacle for blind and partially sighted people. The project may not use this in the South Terminal but will return to the panel if these seating options are considered. The panel would like this seating removed from the North Terminal too.

Flooring

- Panel members highlight the need for a smooth transfer between different flooring types and not making the floor too shiny where any flooring is replaced.

2. North Terminal Assistance Lounge

This item was not included on the agenda but was included as the proposal for the space had just been received and there was additional time.



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Anna-Ruth Cockerham (GAL) shows the recently received proposal for furniture in the North Terminal assistance lounge. This furniture needs to be replaced as it is at end of life, but this provides an opportunity to define an offer and look and feel which could be incorporated into other assistance areas in the future. Discussion included:

- Panel members mention the initial designs show quite a large amount of dining tables which may not have enough circulation space. GAL will look at the balance of dining vs. traditional seating.
- Panel members discuss whether the food ordering process is accessible. It is currently via the Wetherspoons app which may not be easy to use for many people in the space.
- Panel members would like to see seating which also allows a wheelchair user to transfer into it, not featuring an armrest on one side.
- The panel also references the need to ensure there are tapping rails on the tables and stools.

3. Detailed Access Guides

Amy Waumsley (AccessAble) presents on the detailed access guides which will be introduced for the airport soon. Discussion included:

- Members discuss the opportunities to promote the guides via airlines as most passengers do not look at the airport website. Anna-Ruth will take this away to action when the guides launch.
- Members discuss the car parking access guides, and whether they will include details relevant to high-sided wheelchair accessible vehicles including height restrictions in the car parks and the gradient of car park ramps and speed bumps which can hit wheelchair ramps stored underneath vehicles. Amy will pick this up with Ross for further details to include in AccessAble's access guides.
- The Gatwick parking webpage references car parks as being "fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010". Panel members would like to see this changed as it doesn't mean anything, which will be picked up with changes as the guides are added to the website.
- Panel members note that the availability of staff is a big issue to disabled people, and they would like to see this referenced at the top of the guides rather than the bottom.
- Members were not sure if people would think to press the Easy Read button to remove the extra detail from the guides.
- One member asks if 3D mapping has been done as part of these guides. AccessAble and GAL will explore this as a future improvement.
- One member asks whether the website is digitally accessible. AccessAble use the Recite.Me tool but always welcome feedback on this.
- Members ask whether details on accessible taxis at Gatwick are included. Including details on how people can request one will help as not every vehicle is wheelchair



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accessible like they are at some other airports. Anna-Ruth will pick this up with AccessAble.

- Members discuss how the guides are reviewed and how changes to the airport are managed. People can report if a guide is incorrect or if something has changed on the website, but additionally there is an annual review cycle.
- Members discuss how it would be useful to have more real time information for passengers.
- One member discusses whether the accessibility symbols included in the guide will be shown in the airport. They will not be as AccessAble own these symbols but they are similar to standardised symbols.
- One member asks if all help points are illustrated and shown on a map in the guides. They are not currently but this is something that could be added, especially as part of the project to replace the airport's help points.

4. Terminal Accessibility Audit

Janet Jones (AccessAble) presents on some of the key findings of the terminal accessibility audit conducted earlier this year. Discussion included:

- One member requested that GAL look further into the location of shelves and hooks in the accessible toilets for stoma bag users.
- One member referenced that stainless steel grab rails in accessible toilets should be avoided as they can be cold to the touch and do not always provide good contrast.
- Members discussed the challenges in designing appropriate desks with lowered areas, as where these have been provided in recent projects, they have had to be amended due to concerns around passenger behaviour during incidents like cancelled flights. Where projects look at these areas in the future, the panel should be consulted on a design. One member mentioned that they would like to see the assistance lanes at check-in have lowered desks appropriate for wheelchair users.
- Members were pleased to see recommendations to improve the help points and to explore real-time contacts for the assistance service.
- One member mentioned that there were not many recommendations related to neurodivergence or mental health, which could be a gap in the report.
- Members discussed the challenges with duty free and long winding routes and sparkly floors were mentioned. Bypass routes assume that the passenger does not want to shop so do not solve the challenge for all disabled passengers. Other airports have duty free locations laid out in a different way. The chair mentions that she is interested in doing some research on accessibility in airport duty free locations and members consider that this area should be a priority.



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- Members discuss some challenges with the sunflower lanyard and how it is not always recognised by staff or is misrecognised by other passengers as a staff member.
- One member mentions that the phrase “disabled changing” used on the Changing Places signage is not standard and may not be understood to mean it is a Changing Places facility.

Members also welcomed GAL’s action plan to address the recommendations in the report.

5. Special Assistance Service Performance

This item was not included on the agenda but was included so the new Head of Service, Aimee Economou, could introduce herself to the panel. Members discussed how the service will handle summer, however September is normally the peak season for assistance, and the challenges with high volume flights.

6. Innovation Trials

This agenda item was due to be a demonstration of the autonomous wheelchairs, however, this was postponed due to airport disruption.

Members discussed the WeASSIST sighted guide app trial report which was included as a pre-read. GAL are looking at introducing the app to the airport after the success of the trial. Members discussed whether blind and partially sighted passengers would feel comfortable holding their phone or having it around their neck while holding a white cane, and whether other passengers or staff would be bothered by passengers “filming” when using the app.

Members also discussed the autonomous wheelchairs trial. They would like the opportunity to see the wheelchairs in action in the future. Members discussed whether passengers would accept the technology and other autonomous technology on the market, like another product which is designed for passengers to follow it or hold onto it and walk or wheel alongside it rather than a wheelchair.

7. Any Other Business

Members discussed the new meeting schedule that was proposed, where meetings will be monthly online with quarterly in-person meetings. Members requested that new times were looked at for the in-person meetings to avoid Fridays where there can be long commutes home.

Next meeting scheduled: TBC (August 2024)