

## **Full Meeting**

**Minutes of the Full Meeting held at the Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Camelon, Falkirk at 1.30 on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2008.**

**Present:** Stanley Flett (Chair) (Individual), John Ballantine (Individual), Paul Cross (Individual), Bob Edwards (Highland Council), Margaret Gilroy (Individual), Douglas Gilroy (National Federation for the Blind), Fiona Johnson (North Lanarkshire Disability Forum and Access Panel), Maggie Killin (Individual), Lillian Lawson (Scottish Council on Deafness), John MacDonald (Community Transport Association), Pat McGuigan (Glasgow Access Panel), Alan Martin (Transport Scotland), John Moore (LCTS), Alan Rees (Individual), Jim Ritchie (Individual), Terry Robinson (Individual), Matt Short (Nxec), Muriel Williams (Handicabs and Individual), John Yellowlees (First ScotRail), Alistair Young (Transport Scotland).

**In attendance:** Andrew Dewy and Sharon Elder (Sign Language Interpreters)

**Apologies:** Donald Anderson (Glasgow CIL), Fiona Anderson (NorthLink Ferries), Chris Crocket (Inclusion Scotland), Jan Goodall (DATAG), David Griffiths (ECAS), Maggie Lawson (Badenoch & Strathspey TC), Mina MacDonald (Individual), Jackie Maceira (West Dunbartonshire Access Panel), Patrick Nyamurandira (First ScotRail), Jean Smith (Cumnock & Doon Valley Access Panel).

### **1. Introduction**

Stanley Flett took the Chair, warmly welcomed those present and invited them to introduce themselves.

### **2. Apologies for absence**

Apologies from those named above were accepted.

### **3. Minutes**

The Minutes of the Open Meeting in Clydebank on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2007 had been circulated and were approved.

### **4. Matters arising**

#### **(a) Air and sea services**

Reference was made to issues raised at the last meeting concerning new 8-seater seaplane services between the Clyde and the Scottish islands including access from the jetty to the plane and the insurance requirement for visually impaired people to have an attendant.

Douglas Gilroy said he had nothing more to report but was watching developments.

### **(b) Local and Regional Transport Strategies.**

Alan Rees said he had responded to the draft Local Transport Strategy for North Ayrshire in the light of SATA policies including its policy on taxis.

The importance of local authorities and their transport strategies was highlighted in view of the new Scottish Government/COSLA 'Concordat' and the reduced powers and resources for Regional Transport Partnerships other than SPT- although even in the SPT, Glasgow was taking a different line from the other 7 local authorities in the partnership. As a result RTPs were to have reduced funding and transport services would suffer, including those delivered by voluntary organisations. Regional Transport Strategies which had been submitted last March, had not yet been approved and were 'still up in the air'.

It was agreed that in view of SATA's response to consultations on the regional strategies, a letter should be sent to the Minister asking for clarification.

### **(c) Concessionary bus travel scheme**

Lilian Lawson thought that action should be taken on the strong views expressed at the last meeting without waiting for the review of the scheme by Transport Scotland which was promised in 2009 – and any changes would take even longer to implement. A petition to the Scottish Parliament should be considered.

Alistair Young said he would convey these concerns back to Transport Scotland but members invited Lilian to write to Alan Rees as SATA secretary asking him to arrange a meeting.

## **5. Secretary/Treasurer's report**

Alan Rees said that the paid-up SATA membership now totalled 55, made up of 18 non-profit local organisations, 10 non-profit national organisations, 12 local authorities and transport agencies, and 15 individual members. There were some 20 subscriptions outstanding. A few organisations had withdrawn for one reason or another.

The financial position was healthy, unlike this time last year. The bank balance at 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 was £476 but at 31<sup>st</sup> December stood at £1,018. Further income of £542 had been received since then. This position had been reached by maintaining membership and controlling expenditure, particularly on travel.

SATA's primary source of income remained its membership and, having so far failed to raise significant funds from other sources to take on staff and increase services, it would be necessary to review the Business Plan.

He thanked members for their support and was in turn thanked for his stewardship.

## **6. Information exchange**

**(a) ScotRail stations and services**

John Yellowlees of First ScotRail reported on developments and a copy is appended.

Fiona Johnson asked about access at Motherwell station. Alistair Young said improvements were being made to Platform 4. Local access panels would be consulted on the 'Access for All' programme and SATA was represented on the reference group.

Lilian Lawson told of her experience at Queen Street low level when there were no staff members present and the woman on the Help Point screen did not look directly at customers which made lip reading impossible. John said he would take action to encourage staff to correct this.

It was noted that comments made by SATA members had very largely been adopted in the revised Disabled Person's Protection Plan (DPPP) copies of which were now available on demand in alternative formats and can be downloaded from the website. First ScotRail Customer Relations can be contacted by telephone on 0845 601 5929, by fax on 01397 708239, by minicom on 0800 912 2899, and by e-mail on [scotrailcustomer.relations@firstgroup.com](mailto:scotrailcustomer.relations@firstgroup.com)

**(b) National Express East Coast**

Matthew Short introduced himself as representing National Express East Coast the trading arm of NXEC Trains Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of the National Express Group which was now operating the east coast mainline franchise. It had taken over from GNER on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2007 and the franchise would run until November 2013 with a possible extension to March 2015. He highlighted some of the improvements which they were committed to implementing and details are contained in a separate paper attached to these minutes (NB). Amongst the commitments was "to spend at least the equivalent of £250,000 in each year on improvements to facilities for customers with disabilities".

National Express has a Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP) which is on its website [www.nationalexpresseastcoast.com](http://www.nationalexpresseastcoast.com) and is available in leaflet and other formats from Customer Relations on Tel: 08457 225 333  
E-mail: [c.relations@nationalexpress.com](mailto:c.relations@nationalexpress.com)

**(c) Bus design**

Douglas Gilroy noted that First Bus had placed a large order for new buses. This was to be welcomed but he was concerned at the lack of standardisation in bus design in the industry which for blind people presented problems such as knowing where the ticket machines were and then finding a seat. Stan Flett agreed, saying there were 7 different layouts in buses operating in Aberdeen and great reliance was placed on the goodwill of drivers.

It was agreed that this was an issue that should be addressed at a future meeting.

**(d) Dial-a-Bus and taxis**

Stan Flett reported that there was to be a meeting in Aberdeen on 11<sup>th</sup> February to discuss

the future of the Dial-a-Bus service which was threatened with closure. There were also other issues to do with taxi licensing and driver exemptions. Other members highlighted similar issues in their areas.

#### **(e) MACS**

Alan Rees referred to the briefing note he had circulated by e-mail about the proposed dissolution of the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) and its amalgamation with the Public Transport Users Committee (PTUC) otherwise known as Passengers View Scotland (PVS). Declaring an interest as a member of MACS, he outlined the issues as he saw them. The matter had been fully discussed at the morning's meeting of the Management Committee and it recommended that the proposal should be opposed as not being in the best interests of disabled people.

John MacDonald said MACS had got caught up in the SNPs election manifesto commitment to have a 'bonfire of quangos' and this was now happening. He thought amalgamation would diminish the voice of disabled people at the highest level. Maggie Killin spoke of the difficulties being experienced in getting disability issues addressed in Edinburgh's combined equalities forum and thought the same thing would happen in an amalgamation of MACS with PTUC. John Yellowlees said that PTUC was concentrating on strategic public transport matters such as integration and information rather than dealing with specific issues.

After further discussion, a motion proposed by John Ballantine, seconded by Paul Cross, that 'SATA should do all it can to retain MACS in its present form' was overwhelmingly approved on a show of hands. It was further agreed that a working group be established to take the matter forward and report to the Management Committee.

#### **(e) Mobility Roadshow Scotland**

It was noted that this was due to take place at Ingliston, Edinburgh on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> April this year.

#### **7. Presentation: Mrs Mhari Rodger, Coordinator, Forth Valley Sensory Centre**

Mrs Rodger said that the Centre was unique in Scotland and was the product of several statutory bodies working together and with other groups. The Scottish Government report 'Sensing Progress' had advocated a one-door approach and this was also backed up by a 'best value' review and an RNIB report.

The building had opened in 2005 and incorporated many modern features including, colour contrasting, wide corridors, an IT suite, meeting and activity rooms, a cafe and resource centre operated by RNIB and RNID. The capital cost of £1.6 million had been funded by the Lottery, Children in Need and local authority and health partners. It now cost c £300,000 a year to operate, with a staff of 28 under a Coordinator, plus many volunteers who helped in the café, produced a newsletter, etc.

Services included paediatric audiology assessment and training, eye clinics for children and adults, and advice on specialised equipment. There were classes in arts and crafts,

music, etc. Management was by a Board of Directors and a Management Group with sub-groups on finance and for service user.

After questions, Stan Flett thanked Mrs Rodger very much for her presentation and for the facilities provided for the meeting. Members would have an opportunity to look round the Centre at the close.

## **8. AOCB**

### **(a) Taxi office licensing**

Jim Ritchie referred back to the item on taxis and said local authorities now had powers from the Scottish Government to licence taxi operators' offices. This was a response to 'cowboy' operators and illegal practices. Alan agreed to get more details.

## **9. Closure**

In closing the meeting at 3.30 pm, Stan Flett again thanked Mrs Rodger for her presentation and the contributions from other speakers.

## **10. Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be an Open Meeting at 1.15 on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2008 at the St Paul's Centre, 14 New Row, Perth PH1 5QA.

Alan Rees MBE  
Secretary/Treasurer  
SATA

11.02.08

# **Appendix**

## **Report by John Yellowlees, External Relations Manager, First ScotRail**

The £1 million new lifts and footbridge at Lockerbie station were inaugurated today by Wyn Deamer, Chair of the Annandale and Eskdale Coalition of Disabled People, and Stewart Stevenson, Scottish Transport Minister.

Four out of eight 'Access for All' schemes are now on site to provide lifts at Barrhead, Rutherglen, Kirkcaldy and Mount Florida. Step-free access and additional parking by the west-bound platform at Prestonpans are due for completion in March, with traffic lights to control Johnny Cope's Road that passes under the line.

We have completed installation of REACT signage at Brunstane to match such provision at Camelon and Lenzie, and have now received 'Access for All' small schemes funding to install it at Glasgow Queen Street (both levels), Larbert and Kirkcaldy. Such funding

has also been agreed for pairs of tactile maps at Queen Street high level and Kirkcaldy, and for variable-height 'Courtesy Counters' (to which may be added automatic doors if the budget permits) at these stations:

Alexandria, Bellshill, Cambuslang, Clydebank, Coatbridge Sunnyside, Dalmeny, Drumchapel, East Kilbride, Glengarnock, Hamilton Central, Hamilton West, Lanark, Milngavie, Shotts, Troon and Uddingston.

New departures and arrival screens have been completed at Aberdeen and Queen Street, and are on site at Inverness. The ten stations that will receive new Customer Information Systems (CIS) this year are:

Annan, Anderson, Carlisle, Dalry, Dingwall, Glengarnock, Hairmyres, Lochwinnoch, Lockerbie and Shotts.

Sixteen stations receiving on-line CCTV with Help Points this year (the first four funded by Transport Scotland, the rest by SPT) are:

Addiewell, Kingusie, Dingwall, Mallaig, Alexandra Parade, Anderson, Barnhill, Bowling, Dalmarnock, Fort Matilda, Hillfoot, IMB, Inverkip, Langbank, Maybole and Thorntonhall.

First Scotland and Forward Scotland have appointed Gaia Architects to conduct a feasibility study into the use of empty rooms at Arbroath Station by Angus Transport Forum and for other community purposes, and a consultation day is proposed for Wednesday 5 March.

We have completed our Class 156 and Sleeper refurbishments (apart from three of the Lounge Cars) and have received back into service ten refurbished Class 158s. So as to cover for the refurbishment programme and provide for future service expansion, we have taken on seven long-term additions to our Class 158 fleet, with an eighth due before the end of 2008.

Tenders have been issued for the supply of up to 38 three or four-car new electric trains to accommodate Ayrshire traffic growth and provide for the new Glasgow Rail Link and Airdrie-Bathgate routes.

The new station at Alloa is due to open with the start of the new summer timetable on 18 May and will enjoy an hourly service seven days a week by the extension of the present Glasgow-Stirling all-stations locals.

Laurencekirk station is due to re-open with the winter timetable which starts on 14 December.

For further information contact John Yellowlees on Tel. 0141 335 4787.

End

