

Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)

Full Meeting

Minutes of the Full Meeting held on Thursday 12th February 2009 at the Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Camelon, Falkirk.

Present

Stan Flett (Chairperson) (Individual Member), Chris Clark (Transport Scotland), Arthur Cowie (Lochaber Access Panel), Ian Cuthbertson (Quarriers), Douglas Gilroy (National Federation of the Blind), John Ballantine (Individual), Sheila Fletcher (CTA), Stephen Joyce (Deafblind Scotland), Bob Kemp (First ScotRail), Lillian Lawson (SCoD), Pat McGuigan (Glasgow Access Panel), Andrew Overton (LTI), Jill Paron (Taxiworld), Patrick Nyamurandira (First ScotRail), Alan Rees (Individual), Liz Rowlett (SDEF), Kate Sanford (Quarriers), Caroline Tumath (Quarriers).

Two interpreters were in attendance.

1. Opening remarks

Stanley Flett opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and asking them to identify themselves.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Paul Cross (Individual Member), Phil Dawson (National Express East Coast), Derek Dewar (Angus Transport Forum), Bob Edwards (Highland Council), Margaret Gilroy (Individual), Jan Goodall (DATAG & Dundee CT), David Griffiths (ECAS), Maggie Killin (Individual), Maggie Lawson (Badenoch & Strathspey CT), John MacDonald (CTA), Mina MacDonald (Individual), Jackie Maceira (West Dunbartonshire Access Panel), Ryan McQuigg (Leonard Cheshire Disability), Roddy MacTaggart (Aberdeen Council), Tom Porter (Individual), Jim Ritchie (Individual), Terry Robinson (Individual/Describe on Line), Jean Sanderson (Arthritis Care in Scotland), Kate Sanford (Quarriers), Matt Short (National Express East Coast), Jim Thompson (Fair Deal), Muriel Williams (Individual), Ann Young (SEAG).

3. Minutes

The Minutes of Open Meeting held in Glasgow on 13th November 2008 were approved on a proposal from Pat McGuigan seconded by John Ballantine.

4. Matters arising

(a) MACS

The meeting congratulated John Ballantine on his appointment as a member of

MACS with 5 others and the Convener, Anne MacLean. In response, John said there had been one meeting so far which was mainly taken up discussing the recruitment of new members - a possible 8 more. He understood that there would be another round of advertisements. Last time 47 application packs had been issued, 18 returned and 17 people interviewed.

A big problem was the lack of continuity from the former committee. The MACS website had still not been brought up to date, with several policy papers and reports missing. There were likely to be four half-day meetings a year and the next meeting was due in April. Meanwhile members were being asked to respond by e-mail to consultation documents and other communications.

(b) Holyrood Magazine 'Demand Responsive Transport' conference

This had taken place in Edinburgh on 19th November but nobody present had attended to report back.

(c) Scotland-wide National Concessionary Bus Scheme review

A report from the Scottish Government was expected later this month when it would be circulated to members for comment.

(d) CalMac Ferry access

The Scottish Ferries Review Group was continuing to meet convened by CalMac, the next meeting being on 10th March. Both SATA and SDEF were represented on the group.

5. Report from the SATA Management Committee

Alan Rees reported on the morning's Management Committee's meeting.

Application was being made to the Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland for a Capacity Building Grant. The financial situation was satisfactory but sole dependence on membership subscriptions restricted SATA's activities. Projects needed to be managed and this required people able to do the work.

Matters falling within the remits of the 6 sub-groups were discussed, including First ScotRail's minor works programme and the current consultation documents on buses, taxis and the design of streets. The issue of Lothian Buses policy on the carriage of wheelchairs and non-folding prams/buggies was on-going. Public Petition PE 1206 had again been considered by the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee on Tuesday 10th February and more information was being sought.

6. Information exchange

(a) From First ScotRail

Patrick Nyamurandira said that he had been seeking comments on First ScotRail's minor works programme and the installation of wide aisle gates

(WAGs) at Glasgow Queen Street. He was disappointed not to get replies from MACS and it was clear that the committee was not yet functioning. Under FSR's franchise it had an obligation to consult various bodies including MACS.

Other on-going matters were the design and delivery of the new Class 380 Desiro trains, the distribution of Assisted Passenger Feedback Forms and the implementation of Staff Guidance on the Assisted Passenger Reservation Service. (Copies of the Assisted Passenger Feedback Forms can be downloaded from the First ScotRail website www.scotrail.co.uk/special_needs or phone the customer relations office in Fort William on 0845 601 5929)

He answered questions about the gates at Queen Street often being crowded, unstaffed and unable to take various travel cards by saying that there would now be a mix of staff-operated and manual gates. So he hoped these problems would be resolved.

(b) DfT consultation on Access to Taxis

Andrew Overton of London Taxis Internation (LTI) referred to the current consultation by the Department for Transport on access to taxis. He said that the DDA had been relatively successful in improving access to trains and buses with set end-dates. But access to taxis (that is 'Hackney Carriage' vehicles for hire on the street) had been left behind with no regulation for specifications or end-date. The lack of clarity and certainty was not good for consumers, operators and manufacturers alike.

The main reason for this situation was the cost of a high specification vehicle to make and purchase. The DfT, prompted by regulations in Europe, now proposed a interim technical standard and an enhanced or 'aspirational' standard. The former could be met by most of the purpose-built or converted vehicles currently on the market in the UK; the latter had still to be designed.

The consultation document gives the government three options for the future and sets out potential impacts, costs and benefits:

- (1) do nothing, leaving the market and local licensing authorities to make decisions without additional guidance or intervention,
- (2) implement a pro-active programme of initiatives such as issuing an advisory note on technical standards, guidance to local authorities, a demonstration scheme and additional enforcement provisions,
- (3) use existing regulatory powers under the DDA or seek new powers.

Andrew said he did not regard the present situation as satisfactory, with areas outside London and the main cities being poorly served. He referred to Aberdeen as an example of where local regulation on accessible vehicles could only be sustained if there was a prospect of national regulation. Guidance alone had not so far proved to be effective, not one of the 360 local authorities in the UK having the same policy. He therefore thought additional government regulation was the

best way forward.

Answering questions, Andrew said that private hire vehicles did not fall under the regulations but operators were encouraged to make them more accessible. They were mainly used on contract work and in rural areas. There was a possibility that some taxi drivers might switch to private hire. Driver training was essential and should include communication/language abilities. He noted the stress laid by SATA on making fares affordable for disabled people through 'taxicard' concessions. Even so at present where there were concessions the cost was still high and many local authorities made no provision at all.

From the Chair, Stan Flett thanked both Patrick and Andrew for their contributions. The DfT consultation document on Access to Taxis had been circulated to SATA members and responses were requested by 24th April.

7. Presentation on 'New Class 380 trains for ScotRail' by Bob Kemp, New Trains Project Manager, First ScotRail.

Bob gave an illustrated power-point presentation (copies to be circulated separately).

He said that 38 new 'Desiro' trains of 130 coaches, styled in the new ScotRail livery, will be built in Germany between 2009 and 2011 for delivery between September 2010 and March 2011. They will be deployed as dedicated fleets on the Ayrshire and Inverclyde services, including Glasgow and Prestwick airports. They are of proven performance having already covered 100 million miles. They will be the first trains to comply fully with current EU TSI-PRM standards and regulations which had replaced the former RVAR regulations. The coaches will be standard class throughout with a mix of bay and airline seating. Layouts including two wheelchair positions, companion seats, priority seating and separate cycle and luggage stacks (with extra space for the airport services). Accessible toilet designs followed the regulation specifications.

Answering questions about communication for and with people with hearing, speech and sight difficulties, he said that the trains would be driver-only operated with travelling ticket inspection but there will be a signalling system for passengers to make the driver aware of a problem. There will be double-sided and scrolling visual announcements and public address announcements both pre-recorded and driver-selected.

On ramps, he said there would be on-board portable ramps as well as ramps on stations.

Concern was expressed at the general grey tone colour of the interior. The importance of colour contrast for handrails and button controls both inside and outside was stressed.

A full mock-up would be on display in Glasgow in April/May and consultation packs are available. Bob invited any comments by 23 February either to himself or Patrick Nyamurandira at First ScotRail, or to Alan Rees at SATA.

Stan Flett thanked Bob very much for his presentation and replies to questions.

8. Other business

No matters of other business were raised.

9. Date of next meeting: 1.30 pm on Thursday 14th May 2009 at the Queen's Hotel, Dundee

10. Close: the meeting was closed at 3.30 pm.