

# SATA

Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance

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Charity No SC027600

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## Open Meeting

**Minutes of the Open Meeting of SATA at 1.30 pm on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2011 at Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, Glasgow**

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**Present:** Stanley Flett (Chairman & Individual Member), John Ballantine (Treasurer & Individual Member), Amanda Burt (Individual Member), Katryn Cross (Individual Member), Paul Cross (Individual Member, William Dickson (Deafblind Scotland), Douglas Gilroy (Individual), Jan Goodall (Individual Member), Jane Horsburgh (Blind Dogs Scotland), Stephen Joyce (Deafblind Scotland), Lilian Lawson (SCOD), Hannah McCulloch (Capability), John MacDonald (CTA), Pat McGuigan (Individual Member), Bill McIntosh (Scottish Taxi Federation), Jim McKay (Individual Member), Rod Murchison (Individual Member), John Moore (LCTS), Patrick Nyamundira (ScotRail), Hussein Pattua (Individual), Alan Rees, (Secretary & Individual Member), Terry Robinson (Individual Member), Kate Sanford (Quarriers), Ivor Souter (Highlands Council), Vivienne Wardman (Arthritis Care Scotland).

**Guest Speaker:** Dave Williamson (Transport Scotland)

**In attendance:** Frances Simpson (Meetings Organiser/Minute Secretary)

**Observers:** Chris Clark (Transport Scotland), Michael Finlayson (Transport Scotland)

**Interpreters:** Yvonne Strain, Carol Wyllie

**Apologies for absence:** Donald Anderson (GCIL), Fiona Anderson (NorthLink Ferries), Arthur Cowie (Lochaber Action on Disability), Derek Dewar (Individual), Sheila Fletcher (CTA), Robert Graham (First Group), Katy Green (Arthritis Care), Maggie Killin (Individual Member), Maggie Lawson (Badenoch & Strathspey CT), Roddy McTaggart (Aberdeen City

Council), Tom Patullo (Individual Member), Jim Ritchie (Individual), Liz Rowlett (SDEF), Carol Tumath (Quarriers), Ann Young (SEAG), Muriel Williams (Individual).

### **1. Chairman's welcome**

Stanley Flett welcomed everyone and particularly those new faces amongst us. He asked people to introduce themselves. Stan then recorded our thanks to Transport Scotland for its generous hospitality.

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

The apologies were read out and accepted.

### **3. Minutes of the Open Meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

These had been circulated and were proposed by Terry Robinson, seconded by Paul Cross, and approved.

### **4. Matters arising**

Alan Rees reported as follows:

#### **(a) SATA Manifesto 2011**

This had been circulated to all parties prior to the election on 5th May and feedback had been received. The Management Committee would now follow up on this feedback with those MSPs duly returned. The document and briefing notes are on the SATA website.

#### **(b) Consultations**

- Welfare Benefits Reform – and in particular the issue of withdrawal of DLA mobility component
- DFT consultation on DPTAC is due to start this Autumn. The Managment Committee is very concerned about the winding down of DPTAC and is going to monitor this change and take action to oppose any alteration that will disempower it.
- The GoSkills consultation on the proposed review of national occupational standards for taxi and provate hire vehicle drivers had been missed but members can follow the link to this via the GoSkills website or ask Alan for more information
- Consultation on EU legislation covering sea travel and the rights of disabled passengers was being monitored by John Ballantine and this will come into being in 2012. There are the usual exceptions for smaller vessels.

## **5. Presentation by Dave Williamson, Transport Scotland Policy Officer, on the on-going consultation on Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Best Practice Guidance.**

This proposed guidance will replace the 2007 Guidance currently in place and will not impose any statutory duties on local authorities but suggest principles of good practice. The consultation period runs from 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 17<sup>th</sup> June and Transport Scotland wants as many replies as possible from a wide range of groups.

Dave highlighted the sections of particular relevance to this audience: a section relating to the DDA which imposes duties on drivers to offer assistance to disabled passengers, but these are still to be brought into force. There is also legislation allowing drivers to apply for exemption from these duties but there is no information available as to the impact of this legislation.

There is also a section on accessible vehicles, discussing the issue of legislation requiring all vehicles to be accessible which may present difficulties for some non-wheelchair users. There are demonstration schemes to test these issues, but, again, there is no indication as to what progress has been made on this to date.

### Questions

#### 1. Accessibility of Vehicles:

In response to John Ballantine and Jan Goodall, Dave replied that the cost of demonstration schemes may be a reasonable factor in delay, but there were other complexities in the DDA around needing a range of designs rather than simply one standard design . Also, in England and Wales, authorities may have to meet quotas for numbers of accessible vehicles and this may be considered in Scotland. This issue of varied design seems to have led to the issuing of guidance rather than legislation to allow authorities to make local decisions about provision that suits their areas.

#### 2. Communication/Support Issues for those with visual and/or hearing impairments:

Lilian Lawson, Douglas Gilroy and Jane Horseburgh, raised a number of

questions relating to communication: deaf passengers perhaps choosing to text companies to make bookings, and also the problem of some drivers not having good enough written English to understand written instructions; whether speaking meters were being considered for visually impaired passengers who could not see the tariff; and drivers allowing guide dogs in cars.

Dave agreed that the issue of communicating with drivers was something authorities needed to consider in their area and put in place local measures – perhaps considering such issues when approving licences for individuals. On the issue of talking meters, Dave said he had not been asked this before and neither he nor Bill McIntosh who was present and asked to comment could say there had been any serious discussion of this matter. They agreed that Dave would make contact with Douglas via e-mail and research the issue and address it. One specific issue about whether any change would be post car-production and local to the meter or as part of the design stage of the vehicle would have to be addressed and this would be done through the meter manufacturers, and car manufacturers. However, Dave thought that the pressure would have to come from customers.

In terms of Guide Dogs in cabs, drivers were required to carry dogs but could apply for an exemption if there was an issue such as driver allergy. However, Dave acknowledged that he would not be sure how a visually impaired person would see the exemption certificate displayed in the cab.

### 3. Taxicard receipts:

Dave answered Husein Pattua's (?) question about the reluctance of drivers to issue receipts by saying that he agreed that drivers should offer whatever help was needed to passengers and issuing a receipt was one of the requirements. He advised that any poor practice should be raised in a complaint about standards of drivers with local authorities.

### 4. Drivers with criminal convictions:

Dave responded to Pat McGuigan that this was responsibility of local authorities who had information at their disposal through disclosures and police information to make decisions about suitability of individual drivers to hold a license. Although guidance exists and police may recommend that a license is not granted, the local authorities still have ultimate authority and

can choose to ignore the police recommendation.

#### 5. Minimum standards of driver training across Scotland:

The issue was raised by Jane Horseburgh that standards of training varied and what was covered in one local authority area may not be covered in another. However, Dave responded that the guidance has been deliberately flexible to allow for local variations in need. It was also not flagged up through the consultation that this was an issue but it may well now emerge as something that should be considered. There was also concern raised (Kate Sanford) that guidance would not be followed in different areas, and Dave agreed that this would be problematic but hopefully authorities will see it as useful and make use of it. He also said that Transport Scotland would monitor any change in practice that results from the Guidance.

#### General Discussion

Some general points were made from the floor. Alan Rees said that SATA would like to see every licensing authority required to produce its policy on licensing (guidelines) so that groups could scrutinise this policy and make them more accountable to local people. John Ballantine mentioned that passengers in Edinburgh had been asked to choose how cuts were to be made to the taxicard scheme: either through fewer journeys or through lower subsidies per journey. Finally, as an example of good practice, Stan Flett mentioned a new enterprise in Aberdeen with a specialist accessible hire service which was being run by a group of local taxi owners working together.

#### **6. Information Exchange**

Patrick Nyamurandira circulated a report from ScotRail about updates and improvements that were well received (attached).

The specific matters he highlighted:

- Access for All small scheme fund – he reported that the full amount of £700k had been agreed for spending in Scotland which was good news, and thanked Chris Clark for bringing this together. ScotRail is taking this forward for the first time and has presented a list of schemes to Transport Scotland for approval. This includes third party schemes which ScotRail has taken on board.

- There are a number of improvement schemes and upgrades reported in his report
- Local Access Panels – Patrick has asked panels to invite him to local meetings as it is very important that he hears first hand from local people the issues and problems they are facing on the rail network. This was a key message to emerge from today and other members encouraged people to engage and give their views. John Ballantine reiterated this as he felt that the improvements at Waverley would have been better managed had there been effective local consultation beforehand. However, Alan Rees raised the point that Access Panels themselves needed support if they were to be effective.

This sparked a general discussion about engagement and Patrick said that he could only ask for funding for improvements if there was evidence that they were needed and that had to come from local people. Alan Rees asked if a survey could be undertaken to measure the impact of the improvements, perhaps funded through the Access for All funds. Patrick mentioned the UK 2010 survey and he agreed to work with Chris to go to DFT to ask if a similar survey could be carried out for Scotland.

Two final points were raised by Pat McGuigan. Firstly that disabled people needed to be made aware of accessibility on the railways and what was available to them, and secondly that rail operators may have to make cuts to staff and services to achieve the savings required by the Government's best value review.

Terry Robinson informed the meeting that the new resource for visually impaired people who can't use visual maps is now available at [www.describe-online.com](http://www.describe-online.com). This will tell people where all the stations on the network are.

## **7. Report from the Management Committee**

Alan Rees reported on the following:

- The SATA web site is up to date
- The AGM is on 15<sup>th</sup> September before the Full Meeting. Agendas and nomination papers will be sent out in due course and the committee encourages people to think about being on the committee and/or joining one of the sub groups.

- Joint CTA/SATA conference – this is on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> October in Stirling Management Centre and the new Transport Minister will be asked to speak at the event. Funding is being sought by CTA to subsidise some individual places.
- SATA is going ahead with a new Achievement Award and more details will be circulated soon.

Stan recorded his sincere thanks on behalf of all the committee and members for the work he contributes to the organisation, particularly acknowledging the research and information gathering that allows us to circulate the information that we do to members.

## **8. AOCB**

a) Lilian Lawson wanted to ask if train tickets could have information about seat bookings printed on them if they are booked on line as it can happen that the seat reservation is not available or has been altered on the train. This is a problem for those for whom travelling in a particular direction is essential due to medical conditions. Patrick sympathised with this issue but said that it was just too difficult to guarantee direction or travel for reserved seats as sometimes trains are changed for technical reasons. He advised trying to speak to a guard on the train if this happens to see if s/he can help the passenger to find an alternative seat.

b) Stan noted a vote of thanks to our interpreters for the meeting.

**9. Next Meeting:** The AGM is at 1.15pm on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2011 followed by a Full Meeting at 2.15 pm in RNIB, 12-14 Hillside Crescent, Edinburgh EH7 5DZ.

Details of travel arrangements and parking will be sent out with the papers for these meetings. Apologies and queries to:

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