

Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance (SATA)

Open Meeting

Minutes of the Open Meeting held on Thursday 13th November 2008, in the Glasgow CIL, Brook Street, Glasgow

Present

Stan Flett (Chairperson) (Individual Member), Donald Anderson (Glasgow CIL), Chris Clark (Transport Scotland), Allan Crauford (Scottish Government), Arthur Cowie (Lochaber Disability Access Panel), Jacqueline Creighton (Transport Scotland), Douglas Gilroy (National Federation of the Blind), John Ballantine (Individual), Paul Cross (Individual Member), Drew Burns (Network Rail), John Finlay (Transport Scotland), Rose Forbes (DATAG), Frances Gillan (Network Rail), Marcus Glover (Deafblind Scotland), Jan Goodall (DATAG & Dundee CT), Michale Igoe (Glasgow Access Panel), Stephen Joyce (Deafblind Scotland), Lillian Lawson (SCoD), Hanna McCulloch (SDEF), Pat McGuigan (Glasgow Access Panel), John Moore (LCTS), Gerald Murphy (Glasgow & North Lanarkshire Access Panels), Peter Murphy (Glasgow & North Lanarkshire Access Panels), Patrick Nyamurandira (First ScotRail), Thomas Patullo (Individual/DATAG), Philip Preston (CalMac Ferries), Alan Rees (Individual), Jim Ritchie (Individual), Terry Robinson (Individual/Describe on Line), Jean Sanderson (Arthritis Care in Scotland), Kate Sanford (Quarriers).

Two interpreters in attendance.

1. Opening remarks

Stan opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. It was nice to see such a good turn out. He explained that Muriel Williams was absent on doctor's orders and the meeting expressed its good wishes.

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from the following:

Fiona Anderson (NorthLink Ferries), Ronald Bernard (National Federation of the Blind), Susanne Cameron-Neilsen (Help the Aged in Scotland), Chris Crockett (Inclusion Scotland), Phil Dawson (National Express East Coast), Bob Edwards (Highland Council), Margaret Gilroy (Individual), David Griffiths (ECAS), Maggie Killin (Individual), Mina MacDonald (Individual), Jackie Maceira (West Dunbartonshire Access Panel), Roddy MacTaggart (Aberdeen Council), Liz Rowlett (SDEF), Kate Sanford (Quarriers), Matt Short (National Express East Coast), Jim Thompson (Fair Deal), Muriel Williams (Individual), Ann Young (SEAG).

3. Minutes

The Minutes of previous meeting held on 18th September 2008 were approved

on a proposal from Paul Cross seconded by Arthur Cowie.

4. Matters arising

(a) MACS

Trevor Meadows had not applied to continue as Convener but had submitted a report on outstanding issues which Ministers should address. His report had been circulated to SATA members and comment invited. Stephen Joyce noted that the accent was on physical disability and there was little consideration to the needs of people with sensory loss. It was agreed that the matters raised by Trevor should not be lost sight of.

It was understood that the appointment of the new Convener and members was to be announced at the end of November. The new Secretary was Judith Ballantine.

The MACS website was still missing a number of important policy statements.

Lillian Lawson thought that the money going to MACS would have been better spent on supporting SATA.

(b) Wheelchair and Seating Services

At the last meeting Kate Sanford drew members attention to the wheelchair seating services action plan consultation.

A number of SATA members had given evidence and no corporate response had been made.

(c) Holyrood Magazine 'Demand Responsive Transport' conference

This was due to take place in Edinburgh on 19th November. A free place for a SATA member had been requested but not offered.

(d) National Express East Coast rolling stock

No representative was present and an update on appointments and staff training modules was not yet available.

5. Information exchange

(a) From First ScotRail

Patrick Nyamurandira reported on a number of developments. The text of his report is available as a separate appended document. However, he highlighted the following:

Trains - there will be a presentation by Bob Kemp of Transport Scotland about the new Desiro Class 380s at the next SATA meeting in February.

Access for All Small Schemes Fund - schemes for 2008/9 have been approved

Disabled Person's Protection Policy - the reviewed document will be available at the end November.

Typetalk - new technology to be introduced from 7th December which provides a text-to-voice translation for the hard of hearing or those unable to talk. Number to call: 18001 0800 912 2901

Local Access Panels - invited to discuss local access issues with First ScotRail

Feedback - invited on station improvements at stations and on services - contact Patrick at patrick.nyamurundira@firstgroup.com

Members commented that more needs to be done to provide information for deaf people with new technology. Local Access Panels should be contacted direct as well as through the Scottish Disability Equality Forum.

(b) From Transport Scotland

Chris Clark reported on progress in producing a Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan. Projects were subject to the STAG appraisal system and equality was imbedded into the assessments process. Meanwhile progress was being made to improve station access eg at Mount Florida. Transport Scotland was working with Terry Robinson of Describe Online using its Small Schemes Fund. Terry said that the following stations would be getting on-line by the end of this financial year: Dundee, Glasgow Queen Street, Inverness, Perth and Stirling.

(c) From the SATA Management Committee

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

- (1) DPTAC publication called 'Disability Equality and Awareness Training Framework for Transport Staff'
- (2) DfT publication 'Access to Air Travel for Disabled Persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility - Code of Practice'
- (3) Equality and Human Rights Commission pamphlet 'Your rights to fly - what you need to know'

Also discussed was the issue of Lothian Buses policy on the carriage of wheelchairs and non-folding prams/buggies which had formed the subject of a petition looking for equal access (PE1206) by a group of mums to the Scottish Parliament's Public Petitions Committee. The Management Committee had agreed to support the Lothian Buses policy which gave wheelchair users priority and this was endorsed

6. Review of the National Concessionary Bus Scheme

John Finlay of Transport Scotland's Travel and Ticketing Unit reported on what was happening.

He said there were now 1.1 million Entitlement Card holders which showed that it was a very popular scheme. Electronic Ticket Machines (ETMs) were being rolled out and 2,026 of the 6,100 buses in Scotland were now equipped. The aim was to complete the process by mid 2009. The main issue was damaged cards that could not be read. In this case the passenger would be given a 7 day pass and told to get a new card from the local authority.

When the scheme was established there was an agreement with the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) that it would be reviewed in the third year. This had now been done and a report prepared for the Minister. Some 40 organisations had been invited to comment. Recommendation would be published early in the new year.

In discussion some members like the Scottish Council on Deafness said they had not been included in the consultation. There were many issues for deaf people in establishing their eligibility and also using ETMs. Others said the absence of suitable bus services was the big problem for many.

7. CalMac Ferry access

Phil Preston, Operations Manager with CalMac Ferries Ltd, gave an overview of the company's services and touched on a number of issues.

He explained that before the recent tendering process, restructuring had taken place. CalMac Ferries Limited, as part of the David MacBrayne Group, now operated services under contract with the Scottish Government, whilst all the assets, ie piers, harbours and vessels, are the responsibility of Caledonian Marine Assets Limited. He explained the complications of modern ship design and the revision of the construction rules following accidents to ro-ro vessels 'Herald of Free Enterprise' and 'Estonia'.

From a passenger access point of view, the main issue was an increase in the height of the car deck above the water line which meant it can be as much as 7 metres above pier level. To apply a minimum gradient of 1: 20 for a ramp would make it excessively long. Where needed, passenger lifts on the quayside had been introduced but the marine environment can lead to complications and breakdowns.

He went on to say that the process of vessel renewal took a long time. CalMac now has 31 in its fleet and some were 35 years old. Only one new ship was on order: this was in December 2007 and it will not be delivered until the spring of 2011. The needs of disabled passengers were recognised. Ideally all decks would be accessible but this was not always possible. They recognised the importance of staff training, including customer care and the handling of emergencies. This was where they could make the biggest impact to benefit passengers and the recent DPTAC guidance had been noted.

In answer to comments and questions, he said there was little they could do to improve the older vessels. They recognised the importance of meet and assist schemes. They would look at providing better route-by-route information on facilities and they would work more closely with local disability groups.

8. Other business

No matters of other business were raised.

9. Date of next meeting: 1.30 pm on Thursday 12th February 2009 at the Forth Valley Sensory Centre, Camelon, Falkirk

10. Close: there being no other business the meeting was closed at 3.30 pm.