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SATA News

Newsletter of the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance

Scottish Charity No SC027600

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Editorial

Welcome to the sixth edition of SATA News. We started the year with our meeting in February focusing on transport provisions in Falkirk and highlighting the difficult times we are living through in terms of financial cuts. The Scottish Parliament elections take place on 5th May. Which ever party gains power the outlook is bleak for developing more accessible transport services for disabled people or indeed for maintaining existing facilities. But we must continue to speak up loud and clear if we want to achieve equality of access and opportunity.

DPTAC

As we reported in October, the UK Coalition Government announced that it intended to abolish the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC). For SATA members this had echoes of the SNP Government's failed attempt in 2008, as part of its 'bonfire of quangos' proposals, to merge the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) with the Public Transport Users' Committee for Scotland (now known as Passengers' View Scotland).

Now as then, there has been no prior consultation or impact assessment on these decisions but a full consultation on alternative options to DPTAC is promised this year but has still failed to appear.

SATA members will want to respond to the consultation. As previously stated, the loss of DPTAC (or a weakened alternative) will have serious consequences given

its proven record since it was established in 1985 of providing information, advice and guidance, not only to government but also to the transport industry across the UK. Many of these arguments were recently expressed in a House of Lords debate. We are hoping to arrange a special meeting on Scotland to highlight the issues.

Rail improvements

Both **ScotRail** and **Transport Scotland** have continued to keep us informed of improvement schemes under the *Access for All* programme and have asked for feed-back. We were consulted on the new electric seven-car Class 380 trains coming into service in the west of Scotland but there have been delays in their arrival.

Some two years ago we were consulted us on the long-awaited Waverley Steps improvement project by Network Rail and this is now going ahead. Meanwhile chaos has been caused by the closure of the south access road for major works, with taxi ranks and drop-off points being re-located to Waverley Bridge and Market Street. This is likely to last until the end of the year.

A National Forum for Buses

We are no further forward to getting a national forum on bus and coach travel. As we have preciously said, **Transport Scotland's** Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum and Roads for All Forum have both worked well, with the involvement of both industry representatives and disabled people. SATA would like to see a similar forum and there has been correspondence with Transport Scotland to try to establish the case. It would be the best way of achieving regular dialogue on a range of issues such as the loss of socially necessary services especially in rural areas, progress on getting low-floor vehicles into service across the whole of Scotland. ironing out problems with the Entitlement Card and reader machines.

In the meantime **SEStran**, the South East of Scotland Transport Partnership, has found funding to re-issue a revised *Thistle Travel Card* under its own brand name and this should be available shortly. Enquiries to SEStran, tel. 0131 524 5150 or email: enquiries@sestran.gov.uk We hope this will be a prototype for other Regional Transport Partnerships to extend it Scotland-wide.

Consultations and responses

SATA responded to the *Ferries Review* by the **Scottish Government**. There is currently a consultation on taxi regulation and a consultation on including DRT/CT services in the Scotland-wide concessionary bus travel scheme is expected shortly after the new government has been formed following the May election.

Ross Finnie MSP consulted on his *Proposed Regulation of Dropped Kerbs and Pavement Parking (Scotland) Bill* and SATA and many of our members actively supported the proposals which hopefully will now go forward to the new

parliament.

The **Equality and Human Rights Commission** held a *Disability-Related Harassment Inquiry* in respect of transport and SATA gave evidence both verbally and in writing. A report on the findings is promised this summer.

SATA's Manifesto for 2011

SATA has updated its *2010 Manifesto* for the Scottish elections on 5th May and added a *Briefing Note* highlighting priorities. Copies are available from the Secretary.

SATA meetings

A schedule of meetings in 2011 was circulated last November. The first took place in Camelon on 8th February. The presentation was given by Chris Cox who is Transport Team Leader with Falkirk Council. Draft Minutes have been circulated to members and once approved at the next meeting will appear on our website www.scottishaccessibletransport.org.uk

The next meeting is open to both members and non-members and is to be held at 1.30 pm on Thursday 19th May at the Transport Scotland offices in Glasgow. Kaliani Lyle, Equality and Human Rights Commissioner for Scotland, has been invited to speak. Please notify the Secretary if you are attending.

This year's AGM is scheduled for Thursday 15th September at RNIB in Edinburgh.

SATA membership subscriptions

The renewal of subscriptions for the financial year 2011/12 become due on 1st April. New rates apply as agreed at the last AGM. Members are asked to renew as soon as possible on the form to be circulated. If invoices are required these will be sent out. Enquiries and payments should be addressed to our Treasurer, John Ballantine, 8/1 North Weber Place, Edinburgh EH4 1TF Tel. 0131 476 4104.

Thank you for your support and best wishes for Easter.

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