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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 seventh 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 took place on 5th May with the SNP gaining a majority. With austerity measures here and across the UK, the outlook is bleak for developing more accessible transport services for disabled people or indeed for maintaining existing facilities. But we must continue to work together and 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 had been no prior consultation or impact assessment. A full consultation was promised but what happened in June was a letter from Norman Baker, the UK transport minister, saying he was "mindful" to abolish

DPTAC under an order in the proposed Public Bodies Bill and asking for views on five alternative options.

We put out a Briefing Paper in July and held a special meeting with representatives from Inclusion Scotland and other organisations. Mark Lazarowicz (MP) for North Edinburgh and Leith) attended having spoken on the matter in the second reading debate on the bill. Our ensuing response made the case for retaining DPTAC as a statutory body and rejected the alternative options. The bill will now go into its committee stage in the autumn providing opportunities for further lobbying. If you have contacts with organisations down south please alert them to the need to speak up.

Rail improvements

Both **ScotRail** and **Transport Scotland** have continued to keep us informed of improvement schemes under the *Access for All* programme both at our meetings and at the Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum where we are represented.

Some two years ago we were consulted on the long-awaited Waverley Steps improvement project by **Network Rail** and this is now going ahead. Meanwhile chaos was 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 has been restored but major work on renewing the roof continues.

Consultation by **Network Rail** on the Edinburgh-Glasgow Improvement Programme (EGIP) was launched in June and is on-going.

A National Forum for Buses

We are no further forward to getting a national forum on bus and coach travel. As we have previously 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 version of the *Thistle Travel Card* branded as the *SEStran Thistle Assistance Card*. It should be available in the autumn.

Enquiries to SEStran, tel. 0131 524 5150 or email: enquiries@sestran.gov.uk

We hope this will be used as a model for other Regional Transport Partnerships to produce their versions and so get Scotland-wide coverage.

Consultations and responses

Earlier this year **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 his proposals. Mr Finnie was not returned after the election but we hope that another MSP will take it forward.

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 in September and Euan Page from the Commission will be coming to our next Full Meeting of members to talk about it.

SATA's Manifesto for 2011

SATA updated its *2010 Manifesto* for the Scottish elections on 5th May and added *Briefing Notes* to highlight priorities. Copies were sent to all members to help in lobbying and to all the main political parties. A copy is on the SATA website..

SATA meetings

The meeting on Thursday 19th May was at the Transport Scotland offices in Glasgow when Dave Williamson talked about the Scottish Government consultation on its revised guidance to local authorities on taxi and private hire vehicle licensing. We submitted our views and await the outcome.

This year's AGM will take place on Thursday 15th September at RNIB in Edinburgh followed by a Full Meeting of members. Papers for these meetings have been circulated by Frances Simpson our Meetings Organiser.

SATA membership subscriptions

The renewal of subscriptions for the financial year 2011/12 became due on 1st April. New rates applied as agreed at the last AGM. Our thanks to members who have responded but those who have not yet renewed are asked to renew before the AGM on the form circulated. If invoices are required these can 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 continuing support.

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