

**Notes of the Accessibility Forum, 3 May 2018**

We apologise to all participants for the failure of the IT and other electronic equipment on the day and for any difficulties which this caused.

Presentations in any case are always attached to the notes.

**Attendees**

Isabel Liu Transport Focus Board Member (in the chair)

Yousseff Abidat Mencap

April Clifford Transport for All

Audrey Daft Office for Disability Issues

Freeha Fernandes Transport Focus

Catherine Folca Transport Focus

Graham Footer Disabled Motoring

Sharon Forbes Rail Delivery Group

Rupert Furness Department for Transport

Victoria Garcia Brighton & Hove Buses

Francesca di Giorgio Royal National Institute of Blind People

Clare Gray Shaw Trust

David Hanson Department for Transport

Gary Hebrard Highways England

Natasha Jetha Leonard Cheshire

Caroline Jacobs RICA

Emma Jolly Systra

Dave Kent Guide Dogs

David Kimball Office of Rail and Road

Tiernan Kenny Wayfindr

Roger Mackett Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Cttee/UCL

Helen McAllister Network Rail

Victoria Nurse Transport for All

David Snelling Department for Transport

Rowena Stobart Action on Hearing Loss

Hannah Trussler Guide Dogs

Philip Wilks Transport Focus

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**Item 1**

**Rupert Furness: *Deputy Director for Active and Accessible Travel, Department for Transport***

Following on from the Accessibility Action Plan consultation, seeing to produce the Inclusive Transport Strategy, with a launch this summer. The DfT wants it to be ambitious to address points raised in the consultation process on the Action Plan last year.

The consultation’s main themes covered:

- importance of staff and of staff training

- enforcement of existing legislation

- clear, reliable information – before and during the journey

- driver-only trains and unstaffed stations

- the attitudes of other passengers

- lack of wheelchair-accessible private-hire vehicles beyond urban areas

- future transport and autonomous vehicles.

**Item 2**

**David Kimball: *Senior Manager, Rail Accessibility,***

***Office of Rail & Road***

A core function of ORR is to empower confident use of the railway by disabled passengers and promote awareness of advice and help available.

The recent consultation *Improving Assisted Travel* covered four main areas:

* raising passenger awareness
* improving the reliability of assisted travel
* staff better equipped to help passengers
* the potential for strengthening monitoring.

The outcome of the consultation and subsequent discussion emphasise the need for comprehensive review of the DPPP Guidance to rail operators. ORR will also carry out regulatory and impact assessments on changes proposed. Consultation with stakeholders will lead to a draft Guidance in the autumn and the final version by the end of the year.

ORR is also establishing an Assisted Travel Advisory Group to develop proposals; meeting notes will be published.

[More details are available in the attached presentation.]

**Item 3**

**Sharon Forbes: *Accessibility and Inclusion - Customer Experience,***

***Rail Delivery Group***

RDG’s first Access and Inclusion Day in February with, amongst others, Transport Focus, DfT, ORR, Whizz-Kidz, Mencap and British Paralympian Association. Its key outputs included consistent equality training; funding; and franchising – its blocks and opportunities. Another is planned with wider disability group attendance.

Plans for a prototype ramp to replace the 25-odd different versions currently in use. DfT funding has been secured to test the ramp’s compliance. The intention is to have it load-tested and safe for train operators’ own trials.

Passenger Assist Proposition: Phase I is the like-for-like replacement with some added features such as:

* *Customer App*: in March, West Midlands Trains tested Transreport’s assistance APP at 13 stations for unbooked assistance
* *Staff App*: all platforms
* *Conduct* instant customer surveys for instant feedback on assistance.

Customers can discover assistance services at staffed stations and details of which stations are unstaffed.

Phase II should have been undertaken by the time of the next forum in October*.*

[More details in the attached presentation slides.]

**Item 4**

**Helen McAllister: *Principal Strategic Planner – System Operator, Network Rail***

Work on *Railway for Everyone* began in 2016 and is ready to be refreshed and re-examined:

* to identify barriers and who is affected by them
* how to better connect people with opportunities / services
* how the railway can support social growth / community hubs
* deficiencies in current provision
* identify options for clarity on cost, benefit and delivery.

Remit / programmes have been re-established (May 2018) after a brief hiatus; seeking representation from current non-rail users. The study will be complete in 2019.

[More details in the attached presentation slides.]

**Item 5**

**Victoria Garcia: *Accessibility and Communities Manager*,**

***Brighton & Hove Buses***

(Technology failure denied attendees the chance to see the video about *Drama on the bus*; this is attached to these notes.) The scheme is intended to encourage people with learning disabilities to travel independently, assisted by a buddy scheme. Scenarios are written by the passengers themselves. This work is undertaken in conjunction with the Grace Eyre organisation. One benefit of this work is to reduce reliance on taxis, which in turn reduces demand on local authority funding.

Brighton & Hove Buses have now designed a ‘classroom bus’ with video background of a bus travelling to be set up for training purposes.

[More details in the attached presentation slides and notes.]

**Item 6**

**Catherine Folca: *Stakeholder Manager,***

***Transport Focus***

Catherine described the focussed work which Transport Focus has undertaken exploring the experiences of users (drivers and passengers) of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) who have physical or cognitive disabilities on areas such as:

* willingness and confidence using the SRN
* wish or need to travel with a companion
* journey planning: need to plan for rests/breaks; accessible toilets; route planning
* roadside services/facilities: signage; walking distances; at filling stations, the frequent lack of staff is a major issue.
* breakdown: inability to get out of the vehicle; concern if recovery services are trained; unable to scale barriers from hard shoulder.
* traffic information and road signs.

Four key issues have emerged:

* driving on the SRN is positive experience
* disabled people frequently rely on modern technology
* important to conserve energy and reduce stress levels.
* challenges are rarely the road itself, but negotiating utilities, dealing with recovery services and encountering delays.

**Item 7**

**Gary Hebrard: *Insight Manager, Insight & Strategic Partnerships, Highways England***

Highways England has undertaken studies for three years into the views of people, who, in their responses, have shown a preference to be referred to as ‘having impairments’.

Several main themes have emerged from this work:

* SRN: seem less satisfied with local roads
* cost of driving is a major issue
* difficulty of getting into/out of vehicle
* want the journey to be as unmemorable (i.e. trouble-free) as possible
* many road improvement projects worsen the situation before any improvement is seen.

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**Discussion and current / forthcoming research**

**Graham Footer (Disabled Motoring):** many road users also travel by other modes, although they have less (or no) choice in rural areas. Such ‘connected journeys’ have many elements and any one of them can fail. Seeking to do work on this with other organisations.

**Youssef Abidat (Mencap):** important to recognise the need for more Changing Place toilets, not only on the railways but also the road network.

**Clare Graham (Shaw Trust):** the need for an accessible digital environment. Important to be able to book travel easily. Also require access to details if unfamiliar with an area: e.g. bus routes and service information. Disappointed that staff, for instance, are still not familiar with procedures for GWR’s new fleet of trains to ensure that wheelchair users can alight easily at some stations.

**David Kimball (ORR**): research has shown that in addition many people want printed information.

**Dave Kent (Guide Dogs)**: seeking wider application of turn-up-and-go assistance and also of ticket machines which are more accessible.

**Sharon Forbes (RDG)**: RDG is working on a turn-up-and-go Charter. RDG recognises the need. Also seeking to update the Stations Made Easy information, though this is a costly issue and funding is being sought.

**Francesca di Giorgio (RNIB):** in multi-modal journeys, street obstacles and general clutter form a major issue. Assistance training is vital as proven by dissatisfaction with current provision. The various types of toilet and their differing lock mechanism are confusing. Need for more tactile paving, especially at platform edges.

**Helen McAllister (Network Rail):** like RDG, we see that passengers need clarity from the very outset of the decision to travel – it must cover from the start of the process to actual arrival at destination. Network Rail has identified some quick wins but others need significant funding.

**Youssef Abidat (Mencap):** some stations involve a lot of walking. Apps need to provide information about this.

**Isabel Liu (Transport Focus):** ORR carried out its own research recently into assistance for passengers and disappointingly the results showed virtually no change in the satisfaction levels from when Transport Focus had undertaken its own research some years before.

**David Kimball (ORR):** on many journeys passengers may need many individual instances of assistance, so even the rate of 85% satisfaction may mask the fact that an element of every journey has been unsatisfactory.

**David Snelling (DfT):** picking up Dave Kent’s point on accessible TVMs - some 3,500 machines of varying vintages are now in situ. Some operators are looking at video and/or audio/visual equipment. Some companies’ TVMs have an audio facility to a central point where a clerk can take over the transaction.

**David Kent (Guide Dogs):** the current fare structure is far too complex for most passengers to find the most appropriate fare on a ticket machine.

**Clare Gray (Shaw Trust):** very poor ramp provision by too many taxi drivers, unwilling to cooperate. In London this matter can be dealt with by the Public Carriage Office at Transport for London but different arrangements apply outside London.

**Dave Kent (Guide Dogs):** the current fine (£1,000) for access denial by non-complying taxi drivers is too low and no deterrent.

**Caroline Jacobs (RICA):** two main projects:

* ticketing – working with HS2 to design the ticket check-in. A large survey has just ended
* in Northern Ireland, looking at station and bus design for local journeys for people with dementia.

**David Hanson (DfT):** further Access for All rail projects in early stages.

**April Clifford (Transport for All):** meeting MPs and other stakeholders regarding general transport improvement issues.

**Prof. Roger Mackett (UCL/DPTAC):** important that what is proposed is put in place and fully delivered. Two aspects:

* show that accessibility is good business practice
* invisible disabilities – large numbers of people with mental health issues.

The effect of staff turnover must not be overlooked; it is vital to ensure that new staff are properly trained.

**Emma Jolley (Systra):** feedback on design for a new private development near Wembley stadium - a mixed-use scheme; concerns about parking and access to public transport.

**Rowena Stobart (Action on Hearing Loss):** need for access to real-time information and for hearing loops.

**Natasha Jetha (Transport for All):** wheelchair spaces on buses.

**Francesca di Giorgio (RNIB):** shared space issues.

**Audrey Daft (Office of Disability Issues):**

* meeting with visually-impaired people to look at aviation
* community transport changes.

**Freeha Fernandes (Transport Focus)**: access and station improvement schemes with Greater Anglia.

**Isabel Liu (Transport Focus):** Accessibility is a main pillar of our 2018-19 workplan. We have held two accessibility workshops for staff and Board members (one in London and one in Manchester) run by Ann Frye, the disability transport specialist in charge of the then Social Mobility and Accessibility Unit. We will:

* publish and pursue the findings of our work on disabled motorists’ experiences of using the Strategic Road Network
* publish a cross-modal analysis of disabled transport users’ experiences, drawn from our considerable evidence base: National Rail Passenger Survey, Bus Passenger Survey, Tram Passenger Survey, Motorway Services User Survey, Strategic Roads User Survey and Strategic Road Network work
* run two accessibility forums
* carry on our usual accessibility work.

​Pulling together our research in this way will be a significant step forward; we believe that this has not been done before, as disability issues tend to be looked at only on a mode-by-mode basis.

**Next meeting of the Accessibility Forum**

Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, EC4Y 8JX

on Thursday, 25th October 2018 12.30–14.30. Doors open at 12.00.

*We cannot provide lunch but please feel free to bring your own*.