East Midlands Airport Accessibility Forum Notes

7th May 2025

PRESENT

Meeting Chair – Christiane Link, Ortegalink (CL)

Independent Consultant – Martha Foulds (MF)*
British Deaf Association – Mhairi Simpson (MS)

East Midlands Airport – Chris Drury, Customer Services Manager (CD)
East Midlands Airport – Craig Holland, Customer Service Duty Manager (CH)
East Midlands Airport – Nikoleta Kiano, Customer Service Admin Officer (NK)

*Attended via Microsoft Teams

APOLOGIES

Accessibility and Inclusion – Sarah Rennie (SREN)
Derby City Council Equality Lead – Ann Webster (AW)
Spinal Injuries Association – Danny Byrne (DB)
Guide Dogs - Jessica Luke (JL)
Guide Dogs – Jacob Luke (JLU)
Emily Kilby - Consumer Policy & Enforcement Advisor, CAA. (EK)

LOCATION

Pathfinder House / Microsoft Teams (Online)

1. **Welcomes and Introductions**

CL opened the forum by thanking all members for attending. CL welcomes a new member to the forum, representing the British Deaf Association – Mhairi Simpson (MS). MS introduces herself and her interpreters and mentions that she is excited to be joining the East Midlands Accessibility Forum.

CL guided members through individual introductions.

2. **East Midlands Airport Update**

CH took members through the agenda for the forum and then the Customer Service Department structure.

CH moves on to 'Colleague Updates' and begins by mentioning that the department has recently welcomed a few new members to the team.

CH stated that they have completed the hiring process for the below positions within the Customer Service Team:

- X2 Assisted Travel Operations Supervisors
- X3 Assisted Travel Drivers (Annualised)
- X8 Assisted Travel Agents (Annualised)
- X2 Customer Service Ambassadors

CD adds by mentioning that they are on track for having the team at its full capacity ready for summer 2025.

3. **CAA Inspection at EMA**

CD mentions that the CAA are due to issue their annual report at the latest early next month. This will cover how all of the airports are performing. No specific details have been given yet, but East Midlands Airport have been rated 'Very Good' for the last 6 years, which is the highest possible rating, CD states that no changes are expected to the current rating.

MS asked if reports that take place include statistics on how many deaf people, who are also physically disabled that need assistance?

CD responds by saying that that specific data doesn't need to be reported to the regulator, but that data does exist in the background. We will receive data about how many customers have booked assistance through their airline and this will include information on whether they are deaf or have any other assistance requirement.

4. **End of Year – Assisted Travel Data**

CD adds by explaining that this is a high-level data that determines whether we are getting into the a 'Very Good' rating category or not.

As the data shows, we are always aiming for 100% and stay within the criteria to still be issued 100% achievement.

Data for year 24/25 shows plus 99% SLA achievement, meaning the CAA 'Very Good' rating level is expected to be retained.

In the FY24/25, we saw roughly 96,000 passengers that used our Assisted Travel services. FY25/26 we are expected to see passenger requiring assistance to be in excess of 100,000.

5. East Midlands Airport General Updates

CH gave members the following general updates:

- 2nd Electric Sidebull now fully operational, taking the fleet to 6 Ambulifts
- Escape Lounge upgrades and expansions have been completed, including accessible counters
- Ongoing toilet refurb works – Facilities at Gate 8 and Baggage Reclaim now complete and now meet 'Stoma Friendly' standards.
- 5 Future Security lanes now in operation. To be fully delivered by July 2025
- Rapid Drop Off reconfiguration project and barrierless exit system is now complete.
- New Food and Beverage offering 'Alembic' serving Mediterranean lite bites and local spirits

CD gave member an update on a point made on the last forum regarding tactile footprints within the body scanners. Security colleagues have been in discussion with the manufactures to see if it is possible and they are hopeful that they could get something in place. This might lead to this becoming a National and Worldwide Standard. This is a big win from the forum.

CD also adds that they have been in touch with the Guide Dogs UK trainers, and a session has been booked in with some of the Customer Services Management team, Security Trainers and other business areas like Landside Operations teams. CD has invited MF to join that session to share that lived experience.

CD also shares the idea of training sessions endorsed by the British Deaf Associations to take place. MS shares the excitement and states that a conversation for this is something that can certainly take place.

CD thanks all members for their support and guidance on all completed and on-going projects that are taking place at East Midlands Airport.

6. Terms of Reference

The proposed Terms of Reference have been shared with the group for feedback. This will be discussed further in the July 2025 Accessibility Forum.

7. **DfT Task and Finish Group**

CD gave a brief update on the DfT Task and Finish Group, with more information to be shared with members at future forums.

8. **Accessibility Forum Members Discussion**

CL asks members if they have any points they would like to raise.

CD mentions again that it would be very beneficial if an airside tour is organised for MS, the forum's newest member.

CL adds by stating that a whole group airside visit would also be useful. This to possibly take place for the next forum or the one after, depending on operational requirements.

MS responds by saying that it is a great idea, and she might suggest a visit with her BDA team. MS mentions that BDA also can provide accreditation for people that provide a service, and this could benefit East Midlands Airport to have that, which will be another piece of evidence that you are accessible for the deaf community.

9. **Closing Remarks & AOB**

CL showed her appreciation and thanked all members of the forum for their attendance and praised the great work being completed by all.

Meeting Closed.