

Minutes: Stansted Access for Everyone (SAFE) Forum

Tuesday 3rd June 2025, 10:30 am, Enterprise House

Attendees:

Libby Herbert - Co-chair SAFE Forum & CEO, Colostomy UK	Stephanie Putt - Accessibility Manager, STN
Eve Livingstone - General Manager ABM, STN	Tina Smith - Temporary Accessibility Support Officer, STN
Peta Barratt - Spinal Injuries Association member	Mark Neville - Alzheimer's Society
Gobi Ranganathan - Norman Rourke Pryme Consulting	Samantha Leftwich - Thomas Pocklington Trust
Anne Wafula Strike - Paralympian and traveller	Kevin Gay - PACT for Autism

Apologies:

Andy Wright - Co-Chair, SAFE Forum	Sonia Sparkes - Representing travellers with MS
Alice Fullicks - JDRF (Type I Diabetes support)	

Welcome and introductions

Libby welcomed attendees to the meeting, which was hosted at Enterprise House at Stansted Airport. Introductions were made, with apologies for those unable to attend shared with the group.

Libby went on to discuss the agenda for the day. Explaining how **Gobi** wanted to provide the members with further information about the progress he had made with the Surface Level Access Audit. Which he had been asked to undertake by STN, on behalf of his company, NRP. Following which, he wanted to invite the members to accompany him on a section of the infrastructure he had already surveyed. To ensure he had captured as many of the varying views and perspectives of all the members.

Libby continued by explaining how **Steph** wanted to provide a summary of the recent Assisted Travel performance during the last few months. Before providing an update on the staff training module and customer feedback.

NRP review of a Passenger's journey to the Terminal

Gobi then continued by further explaining how he had been asked by **Steph** to review and audit the various passenger routes approaching the main terminal building. In order to ensure that they were fully accessible for all passengers and if not, identify any areas for proposed alteration or improvement.

In order to provide further context, **Gobi** then shared a presentation with more information about himself and his employer, Norman Rourke Pryme (NRP) Consulting. Saying how NRP's focus was on transport, especially accessibility needs and requirements relating to the design and implementation of scheme proposals. Which is achieved through:

- Access audits
- Accessible and inclusive scheme design
- Equality Impact Assessments

Gobi then highlighted in more detail a plan of the areas he was currently reviewing, predominantly from a wheelchair user's perspective. But was also keen to better understand whether there were other areas used by passengers which he should consider. As well as gain feedback from all the forum members to ensure the views and perspectives from a wider pan-disability audience were heard and considered.

Anne agreed with the airport's intentions saying that often she had experienced recently designed accessible infrastructure, where there had been a lowered pavement on one side of the road without there being a similar arrangement on the opposite pavement.

Steph then added about the importance of raising awareness/changing the culture. Explaining how 'people need to know why we do something and the impact it will have on different customers.

Anne agreed saying that it was important to have **Gobi's** skills and perspective with such a project.

Gobi said because of his life experience as a wheelchair user, he wanted to move away from the standard retrofit approach which he had witnessed in various areas with a previous employer. Giving an example of where an accessible toilet was due to be installed, and everything had been ordered in advance accordingly. Yet the builders went ahead with the installation, fitting everything before receiving proper guidance or consultation. Emphasising that often builders tend to have only an installation checklist to follow, often leaving place fittings in the wrong area or at the wrong height.

Gobi moved on to highlight examples of the routes he had been asked to audit. Highlighting a number of audit focus points, he had observed. Which included transport links and through route connectivity, street furniture installations, and assessment of road signs and markings. As well as the suitability of the surface materials and gradients around the airport terminal itself.

Gobi further explained that he had already identified a number of points that required some attention. Which included, the location and accessibility of certain Help Points, lack of rest points, as well as discrepancies with some airport wayfinding and signage.

Mark felt that **Gobi's** report needed to reflect the works that had already been undertaken by the airport, such as the dementia assessment that was conducted by Alzheimer's Essex.

Kev also felt that, at some point, an audit should also be conducted on the Airside passenger journey as well.

The Forum members then undertook a tour of the drop-off point outside the Terminal and Coach station

The group discussed the Accessible bays in drop Zone C/D, especially the situation regarding the Help Point post and obstruction of the pathway.

Anne agreed, commenting on the disabled drop-off point in Zone C/D which had no resting area or covering in during inclement weather.

Looking then at the Terminal purple signage and debating where it should start from and should it also be displayed at eye level. It was also felt that the current floor markings used on the purple accessible route could be confusing as it leads passengers towards the security area rather than the ABM Assistance Desk.

Moving on to the lift to the coach station, there was no clear eye level signage to direct passengers to either the coach or trains stations. There were also blank glass screens directly outside the lifts, which the members felt would be a good area to display directional wayfinding for example, as opposed to overhead signage.

Finally, the Orange car park was reviewed, where it was noted that the Help Point post opposite the accessible parking bay was inaccessible due to a tensor barrier being placed in front. There was also limited signage for disabled passengers to guide them to the Terminal.

Peta felt large purple circles designed to indicate the direction to the lifts, once passengers were in the underpass, wasn't sufficiently clear to her.

Mark mentioned a possible 'quick fix' solution for STN to consider when accessing the Terminal from the car park or coach station. Which could be a downloadable accessibility map on the website for passengers with additional needs to be able to access, which could also incorporate the 'purple' branding.

Again, Forum members felt that lower eye level signage would be beneficial.

Libby added that while she was observing vehicles in the Orange car park, there were examples of vehicles without Blue badges abusing the accessible parking spaces. Suggesting that the airport could/should consider imposing 'fines' to those vehicle owners, or at the very least issue a 'warning sticker'.

Peta raised the issue of Coach parking and accessibility. Saying that there were only two designated bays available. Meaning arriving coaches were required to drop the majority off passengers off firstly, before continuing to the accessibility parking bays in order to off load wheelchair passengers.

Gobi felt the Bus and Coach bays need to be extended anyway. In order to accommodate the ramp that extends from the vehicle. At present this current arrangement, doesn't allow wheelchairs to manoeuvre easily.

Following the audit of the pedestrian route to the terminal and the Orange car park, the members returned to Enterprise House for lunch and a comfort break.

Following which **Steph** shared with the members news about the launch of the refurbished PRM Lounge the following week, which would provide a quieter and more relaxed waiting area.

Anne asked whether the airport intended to include a Sensory/Quiet Room

Keve questioned the phrase 'Quiet Room' and whether an alternative name could be considered. Such as a *family* room for example, as the room could potentially be loud. He was concerned about the choice of language and whether that could in turn encourage some passengers to complain if they felt misled.

Steph said that there had been agreement for STN to provide Sensory Rooms within the terminal as part of the transformation program. However, she wasn't yet aware what format and exact layout these would take i.e. Pods or areas where someone who was experiencing a sensory overload for example, could sit quietly in order to regulate themselves. **Steph** was also mindful that such areas are at risk of being misused or abused e.g. a business professionals wanting to make a phone call.

Assisted Travel Performance/Staff Training/Customer Feedback

Steph then continued with a presentation summarising the recent Assisted Travel performance, which included statistics highlighting YoY passenger growth comparisons. Demonstrating a 23% increase on the previous year's passenger numbers. With a further 12% anticipated for 2025, based upon passengers who had already requested assistance when boarding/disembarking their aircraft.

She explained that whilst other airports who provide a range of long-haul flights may have supported more *assisted travel* passengers than Stansted during that time, STN's main carrier being Ryanair who focus on short haul destinations and generally have a lower number of assisted travel customers per flight. STN's *assisted* passenger numbers had therefore been spread over a far greater number of individual flights. Which naturally has presented the airport with numerous volume challenges at certain times.

Steph then summarised the progress with the in-house staff training module. Which she felt was now completed, or at least the first draft to be specific. Accepting that Disability Awareness/Equality training will never be completed and will constantly evolve and develop over time.

Mark was then asked to present a new slide he had created to further support the staff training module, entitled 'Useful to know Tips about Dementia'. Following which a discussion took place around the slide suggesting it could be used as 'an easy to refer to guide' when having an interaction with a customer with dementia for example.

Keve agreed saying that he felt the guide was very interesting and could be applied for anyone with a 'Hidden Disability'.

Steph provided a brief summary of the customer feedback statistics STN had received since the beginning of the year. Categorising the complaints into topics and then subdividing them further, so corrective actions could be owned by an individual or department and addressed accordingly. These were roughly summarised into two main categories, being passenger grievances that were either related to the 'General level of PRM service' or 'Waiting times.'

AOB

Mark said how he had been impressed with the statistics **Steph** had provided and the good work that was being done at Stansted to promote 'Accessibility'. So, suggested could STN not advertise their performance figures on their website or social media?

Steph responded saying that STN do recognise good performance and communicate this via internal channels. As opposed to advertising on social media.

Libby and **Steph** then closed the meeting and thanked the members for their continual input and support.