



ORR Accessible Travel Stakeholder Forum

16 September 2020, Held virtually.

Attendees

David Kimball	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
Claire Clark	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
Roger Mackett	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
Lizzie Guinness	Equality Human Rights Commission (EHRC) – Observer
Thomas Burke	Leonard Cheshire
Hussein Patwa	Mobility Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
Zoe Courtney	Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
Clare Gray	Shaw Trust
Clare Symonds	Scope

Apologies were noted from David Mapp (DPTAC), Stephen Brookes MBE, Emma Bould (Alzheimer's Society) and Kirsty Hoyle (Transport for All).

Meeting Summary

David Kimball welcomed the forum members and provided a summary of the outcomes of the last meeting held in February. He explained that the work presented in that meeting on Bespoke operators and their obligations under the Accessible Travel Policy (ATP) Guidance, has needed to be put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic but there are plans to revisit later this year.

He also signposted the ORR's annual rail consumer report published in July, which focuses on the performance of train operators and Network Rail in the regulated consumer areas including accessibility.

Impact of COVID-19: accessible rail travel and ORR work in this area

David Kimball presented figures to the forum which demonstrated the huge impact COVID-19 was having on rail travel in general since March 2020. He went on to describe the main issues affecting the rail industry and set out the work ORR has been doing to ensure rail operators' obligations are met when it comes to passenger assistance and beyond. This has included ORR issuing advice to the industry on areas such as social distancing on trains, at stations and on platforms, face coverings and masks and supporting employees.

David also highlighted the monthly calls the ORR Consumer team had been having since April in order to get a better understanding of the impact on train operators' services, in particular those affecting disabled and older passengers.

The meeting turned to discussion and the forum were invited to share both their experiences and the people they represented, for ORR to understand better the challenges faced when travelling by rail.

The forum agreed that disabled and older people are anxious about travelling by rail, and there is a need for more to be done in terms of reassuring them of the safety measures and provisions in place to ensure they are able to travel, in order to raise their confidence levels.

The majority of members agreed that sufficient guidance on how to provide assistance had been given to operators, but more information is needed on whether the guidance is being successfully and consistently implemented.

Accessible Travel Policy Guidance: approvals, monitoring and revised guidance for Rail replacement and the Handover Protocol

David Kimball provided the forum with an update on ORR's role in approving ATPs for all licenced train and station operators. He confirmed that 16 ATPs have been approved so far, and 10 currently at the final stage of review. The impact of COVID-19 on staff resource across the industry has meant the approvals process has slowed a little.

Claire Clark took the forum through the work ORR has been doing to ensure operators are on track to meet the key ATP commitments. This work includes operators implementing the newly reduced notice period for booking assistance up to 10pm the day before travel, and carrying out an audit review of operators' websites to ensure they i) meet the content requirements of the ATP, and ii) are fully compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). Additionally, ORR are due to commence an extensive exercise auditing all operators' station accessibility information. Claire explained that where ORR identifies gaps in all three of these areas, actions will be applied and monitored until completion.

Claire continued on the topic of monitoring and highlighted the recent progress report submission made by all operators on the subject of their staff training on disability awareness. Within these reports, operators have set out the work they are doing to ensure they are on track to meet the new ATP requirements designed to strengthen training across all staff by 31 July 2021. Whilst COVID-19 has presented some challenges in this area, Claire explained that several operators have developed creative solutions to ensure they can still deliver the training.

David Kimball turned to the publication on that same day of both the revised ATP Guidance and the response to the ORR consultation on rail replacement services.

He thanked members for their responses made, and explained the revised Guidance introduces new rules designed to maximise the use of available accessible buses and coaches during disruption to the rail network. It will also ensure passengers have the information they need to plan accessible journeys when trains are not running, and ensure passengers are aware of the routes.

He went on to explain that the revised Guidance also includes details of the new safeguarding measures operators must put in place to ensure alighting assistance is reliably provided by station staff to passengers that request it. He explained that this technical guidance, known as the Handover Protocol mandates the decision to call ahead and specifies what information needs to be communicated between stations.

AOB

David thanked the Forum members for their participation and contribution to the discussion points. He confirmed ORR will follow up with both RNIB and MACs who each posed separate queries in relation to their area and the impact of COVID-19. The next meeting will be able to update members on the outcomes of the ATP monitoring activity.

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