



## ORR Accessible Travel Stakeholder Forum

30<sup>th</sup> November 2022

Microsoft Teams Meeting

### Attendees

Name	Organisation
1 Matt Westlake	Office of Rail and Road (ORR, Chair)
2 Sarah Robinson	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
3 Jacqui Russell	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
4 Will Sanderson	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
5 Anna Saunders	Office of Rail and Road (ORR)
6 Stephen Brookes	Disability Rights UK
7 Roger Mackett	Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)
8 Simon Watkins	Mobility Access Committee for Scotland (MACS)
9 Erik Matthies	Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
10 Charlotte Morley	Scope
11 Clare Gray	Shaw Trust

## Agenda

Time	Topic
13:30 to 13:35	Welcome, introductions and actions
13:35 to 14:00	Research into accessible complaints handling
14:00 to 14:30	Rail workforce reform
14:30 to 14:45	Coordination of accessibility at ORR
14:45 to 15:00	Roundtable update

## Meeting summary

The Chair began by welcoming the Forum members and provided an overview of the agenda.

### Actions

ORR shared an update on actions from the previous Forum. Useful feedback was received on research that ORR undertook with the Research Institute for Disabled Consumers (RIDC) and this was reflected in the final drafting of [the report published in July](#).

Another action taken away was to understand how much lived experience of disability was fed into the DfT/Atkins station audit. ORR confirmed that DfT and Atkins have had input from people with lived experience of disability into the audit design and analysis of its findings.

Lastly, ORR responded to a previous query around data gathered on the availability of PSVAR-compliant vehicles for rail replacement, confirming that this was published as part of the [annual report](#) and through ORR's [data portal](#).

### Research into accessible complaints handling

The ORR policy lead for complaints handling procedures introduced the first item, seeking views from Forum members on proposed work looking at disabled passengers' experience of the complaints process. ORR saw considerable value in taking forward this research after it was suggested by DPTAC for the purposes of identifying any

issues and challenges experienced when accessing the complaints handling process of rail operators.

ORR outlined the proposed scope of the research to include experience of accessing and using the complaints process, as well as awareness of the process. ORR also covered the key considerations influencing research design, which were ensuring it was fully inclusive and accessible to all and ensuring we can reach a sufficient sample size, noting that to achieve these aims a blended approach of different methods may be needed. Four options for the research were then outlined.

A useful discussion was had by Forum members. It was agreed that more clarity was needed around the complaints process, including on who does what, and when, and when it was appropriate for complaints to be escalated to the Ombudsman to prevent complaints being dealt with in parallel. **An action was noted for ORR to provide a summary of the correct procedure as part of raising awareness.**

In terms of survey design, Forum members showed enthusiasm for a combination of options 1, 2 and 3 (adding an extra question into ORR's survey of passenger satisfaction with the complaints process to establish disability status, using existing consumer panels comprising disabled passengers, and issuing a call for evidence on disabled passengers' experience) on the basis that it would provide a good balance of evidence. Forum members were less enthusiastic about option 4 (use of external consultants), although ORR noted that this option was needed for consideration due to internal resourcing constraints.

Lastly, Forum members emphasised the need to consider the phrasing around the research as to not exclude other groups who may also have problems with the complaints process.

### **Rail workforce reform**

The ORR consumer policy lead spoke about the latest workforce reform proposals being developed by rail operators and ORR's role in relation to these. ORR reminded Forum members that decisions around ticket office closures are the responsibility of the Secretary of State for Transport (in consultation with Transport Focus) – ORR's role is to ensure operators are compliant with their regulatory and consumer law obligations, and that they keep these obligations in mind as proposals are developed and changes are implemented. ORR has particular interest in the areas of accessibility and ticket retailing. ORR invited Forum members to share any concerns they had with the

proposals, as well as any potential risks or opportunities, in order to inform future ORR discussions with industry.

It was suggested that assessing the experience in Scotland could be beneficial, with their programme of workforce reform being more advanced.

Members expressed concern at the potential for ticket office closures, citing potential for digital exclusion through passengers having difficulties purchasing tickets from machines or by smartphone. Challenges like this might discourage people from taking journeys, with ticket offices providing reassurance.

Other industry organisations were said to have outlined the benefits for all passengers of moving staff out of ticket offices and onto the station concourse – for example, staff would have more flexibility in their roles and be able to undertake a wider range of responsibilities. However, this was raised as being a concern as disability awareness training may not be prioritised alongside other training demands. Additionally, having staff roaming can add difficulty for passengers, including those who are visually impaired, who benefit from staff being in a set ticket office location.

### **Coordination of accessibility at ORR**

The Chair presented the last substantive item, covering recent internal thinking about how accessibility-related work, which can spread across various parts of ORR, could be best coordinated. ORR invited thoughts on what works well and what could work better.

Forum members emphasised the need for clarity around what ORR's roles and responsibilities were on stations and trains with respect to accessibility as this is currently unclear. They also suggested that it would be beneficial if there was a single point of contact for work in this area, even if behind the scenes there were a number of different teams working on the matter.

### **Roundtable update**

Members took it in turn to provide an update on their organisation's respective priorities:

- DPTAC's main concern currently is around staffing at stations and on trains.
- RNIB has done research on use of public transport, likely to be published in the new year. This is a deep-dive ethnographic study intended to find out the issues that people are having and the barriers they are facing in making journeys.

- MACS is coming to the end of its work on ticket office changes and is now giving attention to issues around ScotRail boarding aids (ORR are currently engaging in this area).
- Shaw Trust is getting involved in the *It's Everyone's Journey* campaign (aimed at championing equal access on public transport).
- Scope is currently developing its Passenger Charter for launch around April.
- ORR have started the process of commissioning operators to review their Accessible Travel Policies with the aim of completing this process by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023. In our commissioning letter we requested specific information on the roll-out of the Passenger Assist app, an update on refresher training, and a report from operators who have driver only operation services at unstaffed stations.

## **AOB**

No further business needed addressing and the meeting closed at 14:45. The next meeting will be held in May 2023.

## **END**