

# George Best Belfast City Airport Accessibility Forum Minutes

Date	11 <sup>th</sup> March 2025
Location	George Best Belfast City Airport

Attendees	
Name	Company
Philip Boyle	BCA
Bill Doole	BCA
Judith Davis	BCA
Nikki Stewart	CCS
Michelle Kelly	Consumer Council
Karen Smith	Disability Action
Jason Minford	IMTAC
Sam Bell	IMTAC
Mark Porter	Mitie
Michelle Penny	Urostomy Association

## Welcome and Introductions

The group were welcomed to Belfast City Airport and the forum that was kindly chaired by Michelle Kelly and for which the airport is grateful. Minutes were taken by Philip Boyle who was introduced to the group as the new Airport contact for the accessibility forum and its members.

During introductions the group were advised that following a competitive tender process 'CCS' has been awarded the PRM services contract for the next 3 years.

## Consumer Council Report 2024 review – Philip Boyle

The group was presented with an update on the actions taken to points raised in Annex 1 of the 'Report on Special Assistance' from the Consumer Council following the forum walkaround visit on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2024, before and after photos were provided to the group to provide a visual reference.

Of the 32 items raised from the forum walkaround, 20 areas have been addressed and were welcomed by the group.

The forum was also welcomed to raised any points that has not yet been addressed.

## Annex 1 Summary of Recommendations

	<b>Arrival at the airport/parking area</b>
1	Consider changing the colour of the “Disabled Assistance Point” sign to blue. This would contrast well with the yellow background.
	<b>This call point will be moved shortly to a better location within the drop off zone and will include improved signage for passengers</b>
2	Consider moving the intercom to the entrance to the shelter (end of zebra crossing). Alternatively, provide additional signage at this point indicating the location of the existing push button or install an additional push button at the zebra crossing located at the end of the shelter.
	<b>This area of the drop off zone is currently undergoing construction works to include a new call point at the entrance to the shelter/ zebra crossing. This will include better signage and will be located at the new Carpark Help desk office where passengers will also be able to have carparking validated for our blue badge holders</b>
3	Add the telephone number for assistance to the airport website. This would be particularly beneficial for those who are unable to use the intercoms while waiting in the car.
	<b>The website has now been updated to include the telephone number for our PRM provider</b>
	<b>Car Hire desks</b>
4	Consider provision of a lowered desk at each service provider to improve accessibility for all users.
	<b>The area of the airport is in the process of undergoing an upgrade and will include new DDA compliant desks</b>
	<b>Security area</b>
5	Consider further training for airport staff in dealing with passengers with different disabilities to ensure they are aware on how best to support passengers with the security process.
	<b>In addition to our staff receiving training on Hidden Disabilities and the use of lanyards, Jam cards, and training from the Urostomy association, the airport is now working with an outside provider to provide all security and PRM staff with ‘lived experience’ training</b>

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	<b>Signage</b>
6	Consider amending the main signage visible through the entrance doors to include the location of the Disability Services desk.
	Additional signage has now been installed across the main concourse to direct passengers to the Disability Services desk
7	Consider additional signage to improve awareness of the seating area immediately after security.
	This area of security has now been rearranged to improve the location of repacking bays to include designated wheelchair repacking tables and to also allow a better line of sight from the security lanes to the available seating at the back of security
10	Consider installing larger signage indicating the alternative route to the departure lounge.
	All PRM staff are able to provide an alternate route on request – the door used needs to be opened by an airport pass holder
12	Lower the braille signage on all accessible toilet doors to enhance accessibility.
	All braille signs have now been adjusted to a compliant height for users
13	Consider implementing contrasting colours for the seating in the bar area, Aspire lounge and for the doors and doorframes near Gate 1-3 to improve visibility.
	These chairs have now been removed
14	Implement yellow strips at the top and bottom of all steps throughout the airport.
	This has been raised with our Capital projects team who will review this area
15	Add braille signage to the lifts from Gate 1-10.
	Braille signs have now been installed at lifts
17	Amend the signage to the toilets in the domestic arrivals area by redirecting the arrow to ensure it accurately directs passengers.
	This area has been reviewed and new signage will be installed
	<b>Toilets</b>
18	Add a shelf for Stoma users in all accessible toilets throughout the airport.
	BCA is currently sourcing this item and will install when upgrading the facilities
19	Consider adjusting toilet doors to ensure they do not swing back when not locked.

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	This area has been raised with our capital projects team to advise the best method to improve
20	Ensure cleaning staff are adequately trained regarding the placement of bins in the accessible toilets and conduct routine inspections to confirm that they do not create barriers for passengers.
	The contract manager of the cleaning contractor has trained and reminded staff of the best positions to locate these bins
	<b>The assisted travel seating area</b>
23	Consider removing the cordon to mark off the assisted travel seating area.
	New reserved seating signage will be placed on each seat to reinforce that they are reserved for passengers requiring assistance. However in our experience this has not been sufficient so we will monitor and may need to retain the barrier system to ensure dedicated seating is available.
25	Provide additional arms (which move up and down) to the seats in the assisted travel seating areas (both in the Departures lounge and in the area opposite Disability Services pre-security) to improve accessibility and comfort.
	Seating is currently under review with the intention to introduce seating with additional armrests.
	<b>Coffee café area</b>
27	Relocate the bin and any other temporary items to ensure the area remains clear for wheelchair users.
	Management of the Food and Beverage outlets have been reminded to ensure all items placed within the unit do not restrict access to wheelchair users

PRM Services (CCS) Nikki Stewart
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The group was presented with PRM data from 2024 along with data from 2023 to show comparison of how the demand for assistance has increased significantly over the last 12 months with 34,917 passengers requesting the service.

It was noted this was an increase of 22% compared to an overall passenger increase of 13%.

Other information was provided including the different types of assistance categories, PRM penetration rate and overall performance results for departing and arriving passengers.

Following the successful retender of PRM provider, Nikki provided an update regarding a planned refurbishment of the Ambilift vehicles as well as a brand refresh which will include new staff uniforms and PRM Assistance desk.

CCS has also appointed a new internal trainer who is currently undergoing their TTT course, and all staff will begin to receive Safeguarding training as part of a review of their core training package. Nikki advised that she is currently working to find a company to provide Makaton Training to staff.

A member of the group asked if JAM cards were recognized by staff and the process for Sunflower lanyards.

The meeting was advised that we do recognize JAM cards as well as Sunflower lanyards and all PRM staff, retail, restaurant and security staff were provided with the relevant training.

A question was raised whether there is concern around passengers abusing the 'Sunflower' hidden disabilities.

The group was advised this is not a concern at BCA and there is a 1 plus 1 rule for passengers using the fast-track lane in line with recent industry guidance.

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### BCA Business Update – Judith Davis

The forum was advised that there are currently no major terminal projects planned this year. However, it did make the group aware that there will be changes to the Blue badge process. This includes increasing the number of blue badge parking spaces onsite which will include a designated area in the Premier and Long stay car parks with improved facilities that will include new shelters and call points in these areas. A new car park office is being installed in the pick up drop off area which will support blue badge holders and provide additional support to the assistance team and passengers.

The group was also advised that the work on upgrading central search has now been completed and small adjustments to restrictions and regulations will be reviewed in line with CAA requirements

Aircraft stand improvements have also been completed to provide better flexibility of aircraft stands to accommodate larger aircraft and improve passenger flow along the walkway at the gates.

### AOB and Questions

In line with CAA recommendations, the group was advised that BCA seeks to appoint a new independent chairperson and welcomed the group to discuss this further with the assistance of the Consumer Council.

An updated 'Terms of reference' has now been produced and will be shared with the group in the coming weeks.

Philip Boyle advised the group that the 'Autism in the air' initiative will once again hold 4 events during Summer 2025 in conjunction with Nicola Booth from QUB.

AccessAble website has also been updated in recent months and includes revised information and photos of the airport site.

Michelle Kelly advised the group that as part of CAA recommendations, members of the forum will receive a short

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questionnaire relating to the effectiveness of the group and welcomed their feedback