



**LONDON GATWICK**

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## **Independent Gatwick Accessibility Panel (IGAP)**

24<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – STEM Centre, Ashdown House

### **Attendees:**

#### **IGAP**

Ann Frye (Chair)  
Sophie Grand (Online)  
Daniel Cadey  
Geraldine Lundy  
Sue Sharp  
Libby Herbert

#### **GAL**

Anna-Ruth Cockerham  
Lauren McDaniel  
Sarah Blasche  
Sirin Cimen (Online for item 5)

### **Apologies:**

Charlotte McMillan  
Neil Betteridge  
Robert Morgan  
Ross Hovey  
Kamran Mallick

### **Minutes:**

#### **1. Autonomous Wheelchair Trial**

Members of the panel reviewed a different model of autonomous wheelchair running in South Terminal Arrivals. Feedback included:

- Discussion on whether it would be difficult for someone to walk alongside you as the chair may perceive it as an obstacle which may be difficult for some travelling groups.
- Whether it is likely to be used by passengers in large numbers as people may be uncomfortable with the technology or have other requirements from the assistance service.
- Other airports are looking at autonomous baggage movement solutions, which could support some groups of passengers to self-mobilise for parts of the journey as well as supporting staff from the assistance service.

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## **2. Assisted Travel – Companions Workstream**

Sarah Blasche (GAL Commercial Operations Specialist) presented on a workstream to improve the experiences of assisted passengers travelling with companions. Currently, airports do not get details of other passengers on a booking other than the assisted passenger which can make it difficult to support passengers on flights where they are travelling in large groups or have other people they cannot be separated from (e.g. children).

Regulation and CAA guidance requires the airport to allow passengers to be assisted with their companions but allows for numbers to be limited when passengers are travelling in large groups.

Discussion on this topic included:

- Members of the panel had noted experiences of passengers with different assistance needs (e.g., mobility and sight loss) being separated. In some airports internationally it is policy to separate assisted passengers from their companions which can cause challenges where passengers rely on each other for support or end up travelling on their own.
- Members discussed how differences in language may mean that passengers will self-identify differently. For example, not every person providing support to an assisted passenger will self-identify as a carer.
- It was discussed how the airport could seek this information from airlines or passengers in advance of arrival at the airport. The current IATA SSR codes limits this, however, innovations like passenger-facing apps could help fill the gap.
- Members felt it was important to keep people together where possible to provide an equitable experience to non-assisted passengers.
- Members felt it was important to clarify the process to passengers through pre-travel advice, signage, and staff interactions, making sure passengers know why they are being asked questions about who they are travelling with and what to expect from the assistance service in advance.

GAL will bring further updates on this workstream as it progresses.

## **3. Assisted Travel – Future Fleet Requirements**

Lauren McDaniel (GAL Senior Commercial Operations Manager) presented on plans to replace some of the ramp fleet for the assistance service (minibuses and ambulifts). This is driven by primarily by a need to electrify the fleet as well as improve maintenance.

The panel discussed the level of ramp demand. This is lower at London Gatwick than in other airports, as most flights use airbridges where possible. However, during peak times of day and



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for some airlines and aircraft types this is not possible so there is a level of planned ramp demand. There is a small level of ad-hoc ramp demand, associated with delays, diverted flights or airbridge outages.

GAL has looked into some possible options for both the ambulifts and minibuses. Members provided feedback on these options and other possibilities for the fleet including:

- Having an integrated drivers cab – rather than the driver being separated from the passengers – helps alleviate passenger anxiety during the process of using an ambulift.
- Would it be possible to configure different cabins to accommodate different support needs (e.g., multiple wheelchair users or sensory needs).
- The height of the step into the minibuses and whether it is possible for the vehicle to lower to the ground or to provide an additional step which comes out.

#### **4. Accessibility Strategy – Mid-Year Update**

Anna-Ruth Cockerham (GAL Accessibility Manager) provided an update on work ongoing on the Accessibility Strategy in 2025:

- The Assistance Contact Points project is progressing following a terminal visit from the IGAP working group earlier in the month. GAL will bring back updates on what the new contact points may look like in a future meeting based on this feedback.
- A site visit is due to take place from a supplier of hearing induction loops in the coming weeks to finalise plans for increased provision. This will also be accompanied by training materials and quick reference cards for area users and a new standard on auditing, maintenance and future provision.
- GAL are looking to onboard a consultant to support with embedding inclusive design processes into all projects at the airport.
- The mandatory online training module has launched to all GAL staff and GAL is now working on a roll out to third parties at the airport like retailers. It has had a particularly high uptake so far in security as part of their preparation for summer. Further work is ongoing, including producing a training video and a package of scenarios for passenger facing teams to use in their shift briefings.
- Smaller recommendations from the terminal accessibility audit are being worked on with Engineering.
- GAL are also looking at plans to improve the pre-travel information for passengers.



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## **5. Car Parks – Blue Badge Improvements**

Sirin Cimen (from the GAL Car Parks team) presented on planned improvements to the Blue Badge parking at the airport. Members asked to provide feedback over email or at the next meeting.

Meeting ended at 16:00.

Next meeting scheduled: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025 (Online)