

# Equality of Opportunity Committee

EOC(3)-08-10 : Paper 1a

## Inquiry into Accessibility of Railway Stations - Response from ARRIVA Trains Wales - Supplementary Paper

This paper is submitted to supplement the written evidence already provided to the Committee by Arriva Trains Wales (ATW) and to specifically outline the Company's activities, improvements and initiatives as it relates to the important issue of accessibility.

### Station Accessibility Improvements

In the paper we have already submitted to you in March 2010, we highlighted some of the improvements which would be realised during this year and 2011. The following is a list of those schemes which we have successfully delivered during the past three years. While a number of the projects below have been funded ATW, we would wish to recognise the outstanding cooperation and contribution of our industry partners:

Provision of a new accessible customer lift at Shrewsbury station, platform 3

Re-marking of car parking spaces at various ATW-managed stations (including those with 'pay & display' facilities) to provide additional disabled car parking spaces. The DfT Code of Practice specifies a minimum of 5% of the total capacity be set aside for disabled parking and any variations to the specification would require a derogation from DfT.

Remote lift operation (via ATW Control) at Bangor, Rhyl, Llandudno Junction, Colwyn Bay, Wrexham General and Shrewsbury stations

Induction Loops installed at all ATW ticket offices and agencies

Accessible booking office counters and new wide doors provided at Carmarthen station

Accessible booking office counters and new wide doors provided at Pontypridd station

New DDA-compliant toilets provided at Machynlleth, Llanelli and Llandudno Junction stations

### Staff Training

We recognise the importance of providing our staff with the knowledge and training required to provide a high standard of customer service to all our customers. In particular, we provide a programme of training and ongoing refresher training to our customer-facing employees in the provision of assistance and information to customers with accessibility needs. The following is an outline of the current training programme:

#### Staff Training Cont'd

##### On Induction

Disability-specific training is provided to every new employee on their Company induction programme and consists of:

An explanation of the Disability Discrimination Act and the impact it has on the organisation and the obligations it confers on individuals within the company.

An overview of the Disabled Persons' Protection Policy.

Group exercises on disability facts plus a station visit where the individuals or groups are tasked with identifying positives and negatives in regard to our facilities as they relate to the range of disabilities.

Types/categories of disabilities, i.e. blind/partially-sighted, deaf/partial-hearing, mobility problems (wheelchair user, walking stick, callipers, etc), communication problems, e.g. stammers, stutters and other speech impediments.

Offering assistance proactively and the importance of being visible and identifying oneself. Staff always asking if and how they may help and never presume. Speak with/to the person, not the carer. The 'do's and don'ts' of what help they can give/the offer being appropriate to category of disability. Written material is provided as a future reference guide on all issues, e.g. the correct method of using a train ramp, handling of wheelchairs (pushing/pulling) and guiding blind or partially-sighted customers etc.

Specific information is provided in relation to the handling of "powered wheelchairs", i.e. the different types that are in popular use and how they should be assessed.

The DVD, "Actions Speak Louder Than Words" is employed followed by a group discussion about the key learning points and the messages communicated.

Familiarity with the various communication cards and badges that staff will come across when dealing with different categories of

disability.

Information is provided on the range of assistance products made available by ATW, e.g. Disabled Person's Railcard, discounts for wheelchair users, discounts for the visually impaired and the procedure to book pre-arranged assistance.

For existing employees, refresher training is used for customer-facing staff, this is ongoing and most recently comprised:

### **For Conductors/Guards**

Customer care provision for those classed as vulnerable customers which refers back to ATW's policy on vulnerable customers and which is included in ATW customer service handbooks.

This is focussed on the handling of minors with no means of payment and the duty of care to, and the identification of, vulnerable customers.

Disabled customer discounts and those available to carers travelling with disabled customers.

### **Staff Training Cont'd**

#### **For Station Staff**

Providing assistance with the safe use of ramps on platforms and trains and reminding of the identified areas on trains which have been adapted for wheelchair accommodation.

Customers who are classed as vulnerable and ATW's policy on vulnerable customers.

Discounts available to various categories of disabled customers and their carers.

### **Website Development and Quality**

The ATW website is currently being improved during 2010 to enhance the user's (able and disabled) experience on the website. The work includes:

Update the current Content Management System

Migrate three ATW branded websites onto one system

Ensure that it is DDA and Double A compliant

Once all websites have been migrated to one Content Management System (by end of August 2010), we will commission the Shaw Trust to carry out accessibility testing which will be undertaken during late 2010. This means that our website will go through stringent accessibility testing by experienced users of adaptive technology for access for people who have

No Vision

Low Vision

Colour Blindness

Dyslexia

Hearing Impairments

Mobility Impairments

Learning Difficulties

### **Publications**

Arriva Trains Wales produces a large number of publications available to customers and these can be accessed at stations and via our website, they can also be made available on request in other formats according to the category of disability. The Company also produces two specific publications, the 'Disabled Person's Protection Policy' (DPPP) and its 'Guide for Customers with Disabilities'. The former publication has been revised to reflect the Department for Transport's guide on writing DPPPs (issued towards the end of 2009) and the latter will be re-issued in September 2010 to incorporate the changes brought about by ATW's revised DPPP together with enhanced information on station facilities.

### **Assistance Dogs (UK)**

This bespoke arrangement for Assistance Dogs was instigated by ATW following work between ATW and Assistance Dogs UK.

The system operates whereby every Arriva Trains Wales Conductor carries a personal supply of special, highly visible and re-usable 'Assistance Dog Cards' whilst on duty. These cards are the same size as a standard seat reservation card and fit into the reservation card slot on top of the seat.

As the train arrives at a station, a conductor will identify a customer who is travelling with an Assistance Dog and, at the earliest opportunity, on departure from the station, the conductor will locate the customer and dog. To assist Conductors in this process, dogs will wear special identification tabards. A space is then allocated for the assistance dog.

### **Arriva Trains Wales' Passenger Panel and Disability Panel**

Our Passenger Panel was established in 2007 as a body which represents the views of traveling customers and provides valuable and direct customer feedback from all users of our services at senior management and Director level.

The Panel formally meets four times a year with outputs from the meetings published on our website (see below) and all feedback provided is duly considered in the formulation of the Company's future strategies and initiatives.

From the outset, it was always the intention that we also capture the experiences and feedback of our disabled travellers and appropriate representation is assured within the Panel for that purpose. More recently, we have since established a specific Disability Panel which mirrors the aims of the main Passenger Panel but where disability issues and policies are considered and discussed in more detail.

<http://www.arrivatrainswales.co.uk/PassengerPanel/>

### **Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC)**

ATW is actively represented at ATOC's Disability Group which meets on a frequent basis to share best practice across the UK network, where possible adopt common approaches and also to discuss emerging Codes of Practice, legislation and policy.

ATOC is also the body which manages the Assisted Passenger Reservation System and provides the National Rail Enquiries Service funded proportionally by all Train Operating Companies. Within its website can be found the 'Stations Made Easy' facility which incorporates a useful information function for every UK station, in particular access within the station and the facilities provided at that location.

### **Partnership Working and Consultation**

As stated in the current ATW 'Guide for Customers with Disabilities', our aim is to proactively involve and engage with representative groups and develop positive partnerships, especially where major changes may occur to stations and facilities. This will also involve working closely with all our stakeholders and industry partners but we are always keen to learn the views and experiences of all our customers as it relates to the accessibility of our trains and facilities for future planning purposes. Most recently we have involved the appropriate representatives for the 'hump' schemes at Aberdovey and Valley, the additional platform zero lift at Cardiff Central and the large development schemes at Swansea and Newport. We have also appraised Disability Wales on accessibility issues across our network and seek to maintain this important dialogue in the future. A prime example of partnership working is highlighted with ATW (through its Community Affairs Manager) working with Assistance Dogs UK to provide a unique solution to a real issue for travellers and their assistance dogs by introducing a free seat reservation system for assistance dogs.

### **Monitoring and Review**

ATW will monitor its progress internally through its Customer Relations function and its process of continuous improvement. In conjunction with stakeholders such as Welsh Assembly Government and Passenger Focus, we will participate in finding solutions and facilitate in all aspects of customer surveys.

In the past, we have commissioned a specific consultancy to undertake systematic surveys of a number of stations, train services and customer service provision for disabled travellers in the guise of 'mystery shopper' and we will again consider this as a tool for measuring our progress and level of customer satisfaction in the future.

Michael Vaughan  
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