

London Southend Airport (LSA)

Meeting Notes from PRM Committee Meeting

24th March 2025 at 13:00 – 14:30

at the London Southend Jet Centre

Invited

LSA		
Interim Security Manager	Sophie Larby	Apologies
Airport Duty Manager	Richard Hodgson	Apologies
CSR Manager	Jo Marchetti	Attended
Airport Duty Manager	Leanne Dubovie	Attended
Surface Access	Andrew Owens	Attended
PRM representatives		
Qualified Teacher for Vision Impairment (QTVI)	Beatrice Iordachi Lisa Curwood	Apologies Attended
Hearing Loss	Aaron Coles	
BSL Sign Language	Daniel Dominey	Apologies
Age Concern	Mike Nicolson	Attended
Older People's Community Mental Health, Dementia & Frailty	Spencer Dinnage Nancy Smith	Apologies Apologies
Dementia (early onset)	Clare Kelly – Peaceful Place	Apologies
Autism/ADHD (children)	Mikaela Clements – Little Heroes ASD Sophie Issac	Attended Attended
Autism (adult)	Dawn Avery – parent/author Keith Avery - parent Aston Avery – adult with autism	Apologies
Anxiety	Anxiety Society	
Mental Health	Sophie Cooper – SECE Mind	Apologies
Guide Dogs	Penny Hefferan	Attended
Sunflower – Hidden Disabilities	Ruth Rabet	Attended
Passenger – wheelchair user	Zec Richardson Donna Richardson	Attended
Essex Therapy Dogs	Tina Jullings Anne	Attended
Garon Park Wellbeing	Caroline Reynolds	
Airport Consultative Committee	Les Sawyer	Attended
Andrews Taxi	Tommy Watson	
CAA representative	Emily Kilby Lewis Wake	
easyJet Airline	Harvey Willis	Attended
Learning Disabilities	Joel Wall	Attended
SCC - LD User Voice Group	Neil Songer	Attended

Welcome and introductions.

Jo Marchetti welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited members to introduce themselves and explain who they were representing.

Update on outstanding actions

1	Walk through video – Zec offered to assist. 03/04/24 Spencer Dinnage offered to assist with 360 camera and editing. 24/03/25 JM suggested adding some photos and simple instructions to the Assisted Travel webpage as an interim measure	Outstanding To be actioned when resources available.
2	AO – feedback items from rail station tour	See separate note attached
3	Suggestion to add information to website regarding ear defenders. Action JM to check advice on Blue Band leaflets	Blue Band leaflets state: <i>If noise upsets you, make sure to have a music player loaded with your favourite tracks and headsets with you. Preferably, try to have an easy listening music list among your choices.</i>
4	LD Action: Little Heroes requested a familiarisation visit for their families with autistic children. LD offered to visit Little Heros to talk to them.	LD to action
5	JM Action: CK Peaceful Place) asked to be put in touch with Essex Therapy Dogs.	Actioned
6	JM Action: Coordinate training event for BSL/Visual impairment/dementia in Spring 25.	With the People team – currently onboarding new colleagues

Airport Update provided by Jo Marchetti

On 2nd December, Jude Winstanley joined the team as our new CEO. Jude has been appointed by London Southend Airport owners Carlyle and Cyrus Capital Partners and brings over 25 years of experience in commercial aviation from British Airways, Swissport, International Airlines Group and Bain & Company. He has worked across several areas including ground handling, cargo, aircraft operations and customer experience.

In December, London Southend celebrated its first ever package flight to Lapland. 214 passengers departed to Ivalo for a special visit to Santa.

Winter 2024/25 routes also included Amsterdam, Paris, Alicante and Geneva. Passenger numbers for November to January 2025 total 40,133 with load factors at 78%. Passenger numbers are consistent with the same period last year.

The airport will welcome an increase in its commercial operation from summer 2025 following the return of a three-aircraft (A320Neo) easyJet base in March. This will be long-term contract which will see the number of based aircraft grow over the coming years.

Passengers can now book holidays to 23 destinations across Europe and North Africa with flights to, Pisa, Marrakech, Malta, Reus and Almeria in Spain, Gran Canaria, Tenerife, Geneva, Bulgaria, Alicante, Palma de Mallorca, Malta, Malaga, Amsterdam, Paris, Antalya and Dalaman in Turkey, Tunisia, Lanzarote, Barcelona, Austria, Newquay and Lapland!

The airport is growing its passenger numbers and met a target of 280K passengers this reporting year. Expecting over 700K from easyJet alone in 2025.

The Business Development team attended the Connect Event in February where they met over 20+ airlines. They are also preparing for Routes Europe which takes place in Seville in April. While there, they will have a London Southend Airport stand and arrange meetings with key airlines, airports and tourism boards to both build new business and ensure the success of current routes.

In January, the airport hosted its second-ever consumer travel show at the airport's Holiday Inn hotel. The event, which was organised by the airport along with East of England Co-op Travel, featured numerous stands and presentations from some of the biggest holiday brands which already operate flights from the airport.

Employment

Over 400 applications were received following the Recruitment Day held in November. A further recruitment event for Food and Beverage roles was held Monday 27th January which saw a further 100+ applications from local people interested in the terminal restaurant and cafes.

There are currently 25 different roles on offer on the LSA website including Ramp Agents, Food & Beverage roles, Operations, Passenger Experience Assistants, Security, ATC and Technical Services.

Current LSA colleague headcount (including rail) is 256, (over 350 including the Hotel).

Onboarding and vetting are underway for 130-140 new starters to join the business in February and March for the summer 25 schedule, increasing the headcount to approx. 380-390 directly employed (excluding hotel).

87% of airport colleagues currently live in an SS postcode area.

The easyJet three-aircraft base is expected to create 130-150 jobs at London Southend for pilots and crew and support many more indirect jobs. A large percentage will be returning easyJet crews.

Community Impact

Total volunteering hours donated by LSA colleagues so far this year = 225 hours

LSA once again supported its charity partner SECE Mind and their annual Mental Elf event in December, which raised over £5,000 for mental health services.

The airport is supporting national 'Time to Talk' day on 6th February by displaying bench banners in the terminal and rail station, encouraging people to talk about mental health.

15 students from St Thomas Moore High School aviation society visited the ATC control tower in December and were shown the VCR, Radar room and simulator equipment.

Over 50 cabin crew, aviation, level 2 travel and level 3 travel students from Thurrock/South Essex colleges visited the airport in November.

Colleagues from our People team visited the South Essex College to attend a mock Interviews event. Students were given help and advice to prepare them for interview processes when they finish education. The airport will continue to sponsor and support local events and good causes in 2025.

LSA colleagues will be back at Roots Hall this May for our annual charity football match against Run Free FC. A member of the LSA Fire team will be running the London Marathon 2025 to raise money for our charity partner [SECE Mind](#).

LSA liaised with a member of its PRM Committee to arrange an 'Autism Reality Event' for 24 passenger facing colleagues in March 2025.

Discussion:

- JM and AO confirmed that LSA does not use a mobile parking app, and all airport parking must be booked via the LSA website. A passenger had complained of using an app that said the car parks were full. This could be an off-site parking company.
- Penny and Ruth gave advice on fair recruitment for people with disabilities. Adverts must not discriminate e.g. advertising for someone with excellent communication may eliminate someone with a stammer applying.

JM confirmed that there were numerous colleagues in responsible roles that had autism. Not all operational roles were suitable for wheelchair users.

- JM confirmed that there were some work experience opportunities in landside departments however the airport does not advertise work experience, as most roles are airside and need security passes and escorting.

Autism Experience event 20th March 2025

Thanks to Dawn Avery (Astons Way), Training2Care provided an Autism Reality Experience training day for airport colleagues on Thursday 20th March 2025.

18 LSA passenger facing colleagues attended the course which gives delegates an experience of what autism might be like by using specialist equipment and creating a simulated environment.

Delegates were expected to carry out simple tasks during the training and will be able to empathise with challenges that people living with autism may experience.

The course provided an opportunity for LSA colleague to share their own experiences with autism and discuss ways that they could improve customer service for passenger that have hidden disabilities.

Liam Quick said “ I really enjoyed the Autism awareness course and found it a real eye opener. It gave me a small glimpse into the struggles that people with autism deal with daily. I will now have more confidence to assist wherever possible when passengers with autism visit the airport”.

Michelle Kingsland (Head of People) said “For me, the experience was amazing. Having two (now adult) autistic sons, it has enabled me to far better understand their needs when they are at the point of a meltdown and are in need of support. It has also given me invaluable insight as to what support and adjustments we can make to our recruitment, onboarding and support processes for colleagues who join the business. I wholeheartedly recommend it to anyone!”

Jo Marchetti said “The course provided invaluable insight into the challenges faced by people on the autistic spectrum, especially in a busy environment like an airport, where there are loud noises, unusual smells and unfamiliar people. Understanding how the senses may be affected enables us to better support our passengers with autism or those travelling with children with autism”.

Discussion:

- Sophie gave a detailed description when she travelled through London Southend Airport and encountered issues at security and UKBF (arrivals). Sophie described how her son is autistic, and she has ADHD, she found it stressful getting her young son to go through the security arch by himself. Ruth suggested a Sunflower floor sticker could be helpful, in guiding children where to stand.
Action LD to investigate adding stickers to security for guidance.
- Sophie also felt the UKBF were unfriendly and unhelpful when she came back to Southend. JM recommended providing feedback via the UKBF website. The arrivals hall is under the jurisdiction of UKBF not LSA. Ruth confirmed that UKBF **do** recognise the Sunflower in all ports, not just airports.
- The PRM members all agreed that a walk-through video, additional signage and floor markers would be beneficial in helping children with hidden disabilities follow instructions and prepare themselves for the security process.
- Signage in the security area should show where pax with hidden disabilities can get help.
- Zec described to Wallis (easyJet) how he is nervous to fly as he worries about damage to his specialised wheelchair. Wallis said she understands his nervousness but that damage to wheelchairs is not common.
- Ruth advised that [Rights for Flights](#) were campaigning for space on aircraft to store wheelchairs in the cabin. Similar to a folding chair space on buses. They are currently working with Airbus and Boeing.
- Wallis confirmed the process for disembarking passengers with Guide Dogs. They are usually seated in Row 1 or 2 for easy access. Disabled passengers may prefer to get off last but should be provided ‘freedom of choice’. Guide Dogs may need to go to the toilet and can use the stairs so may be better to disembark first.

CAA Passenger Survey: Mar – Oct 2024

Departing PRM passengers:

- Please rate the quality of the assistance that was provided to you to help you get through the airport (i.e. from the point you arrived at the airport to the point where you were about to board the aircraft).

Excellent	80.69%
Good	13.79%
Acceptable	1.38%
Poor	2.76%
N/A	1.38%

- Please rate the quality of the assistance that was provided to you to help you board the aircraft, move to your seat and, if required, store your cabin baggage.

Excellent	72.41%
Good	13.79%
Acceptable	3.45%
Poor	1.38%
N/A	8.97%

- Please rate the general helpfulness and courtesy of the airport staff meeting your assistance needs.

Excellent	87.59%
Good	9.66%
Acceptable	1.38%
Poor	0.69%
N/A	0.69%

Positive passenger feedback comments:

"Fantastic care and attention. Far exceeds other airport experiences"

"Excellent everywhere, staff at all stages were wonderful."

"There was only one poor member of staff there. We waited a while in the special assistance area, then we're taken into departures. This is where it went wrong. We were forgotten and nearly missed our flight. I had to ask a cleaner to alert the boarding gate staff that we had been left behind".

"Overall your care package was second to none was a total pleasure to fly from Southend Airport".

"Dear Sirs/Madam, the assistance and friendliness of the staff at London Southend Airport was exceptional it made the experience enjoyable I would use London Southend Airport just for this only in future."

Room for improvement:

"Not the actual assistance, but airport security was absolutely appalling, they didn't know how to treat me or my disability, in fact they were so bad, I will be making a separate complaint about them, I have never in all the years I have been flying come across such a bunch of incompetent security staff".

"I required assistance from the car park, but no one answered the call button so I had to get someone from the carpark to help with my trolley to the airport terminal".

"This is the first time I've used assistance at Southend and felt it wasn't as good as Gatwick or Heathrow".

"I had to transport my wife on top of the cases into the airport lounge, as no one had told us that there was a special assistance call button in the long stay carpark, that's why the rating is only Good for the outbound flight"

"Would have liked help pushing my husband in the wheelchair as I had two cases to manage".

"Pre flight at arrivals - in planning my flight, it would be good if confirmation could be sent by the Special Assistance team at the departure airport, giving instructions where to go for drop off, where the special assistance desk/Team are within the airport and a contact number. My wife had to go into SEN for find this out, but alas there was no team members there to assist with our enquiry!"

"Assistance in Spain was 100% better coming back than going"

"We could not get assistance from the short stay car park. However, Julie saw us and came out to meet us and took me inside. She could have done with a second person landside as she had to take us through security separately."

Arriving PRM passengers:

- Please rate the quality of the assistance that was provided to you to help you move from your seat, retrieve your cabin baggage (if required) and disembark the aircraft.

Excellent	74.12%
Good	9.41%
Acceptable	4.71%
Poor	0%
Extremely Poor	1.18%
N/A	10.59%

- Please rate the quality of the assistance that was provided to you to help you move from the arrival gate, through immigration (if an international flight) and baggage collection, and out of the airport building.

Excellent	76.47%
Good	7.06%
Acceptable	4.71%
Poor	2.35%
Extremely poor	1.18%
N/A	8.24%

- Please rate the general helpfulness and courtesy of the airport staff in meeting your assistance needs

Excellent	82.35%
Good	4.71%
Acceptable	5.88%
Poor	2.35%
N/A	0%

Positive passenger feedback comments:

"Stress free and with a smile."

"Assisted us all the way from getting off the plane to being picked up up from the airport carpark taxi area"

"From start to finish to boarding the aircraft was 5 star service"

"Again, the assistance was amazing lift down provided and then an assistant arrived with wheelchair to take to passport control on to luggage area and then through customs and then on to carpark exceptional service, but ever so friendly and polite couldn't praise them enough for their help."

Room for improvement:

"Was helped to luggage reclaim but then advised no one to help further unless prepared to wait 15 / 20 mins. This is when help needed with luggage when have mobility problems."

"I had to wait for a wheelchair once I had left the plane and abandon the wheelchair once in the baggage collection area as the wheelchair was needed for somebody else. Luckily my daughter could help me".

Discussion:

- PRM members suggested that an assistance button should be linked to a mobile unit that can arrive to the car park to help or diverted to the Control Room.
- Can a sign be added at the help point with an alternative number to call for assistance if no one responds to the call button?
- Regulation requires a call point.
- Signs could also be written in braille. Penny added that whilst it's great to include Braille, presuming that anyone driving to the car park would have vision and therefore, the cost of Brailleing a sign might not be a priority. Ensuring that it's in clear readable print on a contrasting background would be more helpful. It is also difficult for someone with very little or no vision to locate signage.

Action AO to investigate alternative signage and divert system.

PRM Member Presentation/update

➤ Ruth Rabet - Hidden Disabilities

New Sunflower card launched – Sunflower Extra NFC chip (like bank card). User able to tap on phone so people do not have to keep explaining disabilities. Like a medical ID. Specific medical and assistance needs explained on phone. Details such as wheelchair battery dimensions etc. can be displayed on any mobile phone, which is helpful for non-verbal users and those that find busy environments overwhelming. Information remains for up to 5 mins. £25 for card. Discount offered to end of March. Includes Google translate. For more information <https://hdsunflower.com/uk/sunflower-extra-card.html>

➤ Mike Nicholson – Age Concern

Mike wanted to thank the attendees at last March's meeting for completing our survey about the future of the Havens building as with their help Age Concern were successful in obtaining a grant of £960,000 from the Community Ownership Fund towards the cost of buying the Havens building. They got the good news just before Christmas and the grant is conditional on Age Concern Southend raising the remaining £240,000 that it needs to buy the building by December 2025.

Action: Mike to forward the fundraising link to the PRM Committee.

Passenger PRM feedback since last meeting (Winter 2024/25)

No PRM passenger complaints received.

Rail station actions – Andrew Owens

Andrew went through the feedback from members provided at the previous walk around at the rail station.

1. LG noted that signage would be better at eye-level. Colours blue, red and yellow are easier to follow. *Currently doing a full signage refresh as part of a wider airport project. This is being looked at in multiple phases over the coming months*
2. LS – asked when the X30 will return. LSA is talking to First, but it would require passenger numbers to increase. *Ongoing conversations with First re X30 – regular meetings. X30 provided pax usage at Eastwoodbury Lane stop. Will monitor through 2025 as pax numbers increase.*
3. BI suggested tactile paving from crossing to station. Recommend tramline. Platform 1 sign needs to be bigger. *Med-long term target. Cost implications. Will investigate industry funding. Platform 1 sign will be part of the solution for no1*
4. CK suggested yellow footprints (floor signage) to show direction for dementia passengers. *AO plans to raise with RDG and plans to discuss in RSSB Stations Operators Working Group Red framing on the doorways would help passengers with poor vision/sensory challenges.*

Red framing would be considered a potential risk. Signal Sighting RIS stipulates assessments would be required to model.

5. ZR said the station disabled toilet was excellent – clean and spacious. AO explained the processes for boarding and alighting trains for passengers requiring special assistance/wheelchair users. Level boarding needs to be notified in advance.

LSA undertake 'best efforts' to notify in advance. Responsibility is with GA to notify destination station. LSA will check with GA when boarding PRM passengers.

6. Could signage for assistance be as large as the trespass poster with QR code?
This is being looked at as part of a signage refresh.
7. Request for barrier in front of door to platform to prevent passengers with dementia, sight impairment or sensory challenges continuing onto tracks. Physical barriers may be difficult but potential for yellow floor signage. CK suggested using Makaton symbol for STOP. AO to check rail legislation.
AO Plans to raise with RDG and discussions at RSSB Station Operators Working Group
8. Colour of floor and seating all grey – needs to be different for visually impaired.
LSA currently exploring costs for refurbished seating – This will be considered as part of the works with PRM Committee to be consulted prior to works to consider colour suitability
9. AO asked for opinions on having all wide barriers/gates. Members agreed that passengers with cases and disabilities would benefit from wider ticket gates.
Long Term target with risk assessments and costings required.
10. Is it possible to clearly mark the raised platform under the ticket gates?
This is being discussed with Cubic, the manufacturer to ensure any modifications are in line with their terms of operation. Options are being explored.

AOB

Penny arrived at the rail station for the meeting and gave her feedback on her experience.

- Overall ok however website could be improved for disability passengers. Messaging around 100 paces could be misleading. Penny found it difficult to know what side of the station she disembarked and which direction to head, once off the train.
- Noone in the Ticket Desk offered assistance. (AO is recruiting for additional staff to man the desk/gates).
- Penny had personally chosen not to pre-book assistance but also said that although it was helpful to pre-book where times are known, assistance can be provided by Greater Anglia, even if someone hasn't pre-booked.
- Advice on the website 'not to disturb guide dogs' is welcomed but staff need to be reminded.

Meeting ended at 15.00.