Written response to the recommendations from Transport Scotland

Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities

Further to my letter of 5 November concerning your request relating to the Equal Opportunities Committee’s report into removing the barriers faced by disabled people, please find enclosed an overview of Transport Scotland’s responses. This document also includes information on progress made during 2007.

I hope this is helpful.

I am copying this reply to the Minister for Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change.

MALCOLM REED
Chief Executive
Transport Scotland
26 November 2007
Transport Scotland Response (February 2007) and progress November 2007

Recommendation 3

The committee recommends that all public authorities should work to the social model of disability when implementing their duties under the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty.

Transport Scotland accepts this recommendation.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that all public sector staff, especially in light of the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty, have the promotion of equalities as part of their job descriptions and performance competencies.

Transport Scotland staff are covered by the terms and conditions of employment of the Scottish Executive and by its Disability Equality Scheme. A central response on these recommendations has, therefore, been provided separately.

Recommendation 18

The Committee is of the view that the public sector should be setting an example in the employment of disabled people and the Committee recommends that public bodies should use the forthcoming Disability Equality Duty to establish and deliver exemplar practices in the employment of disabled people.

Transport Scotland staff are covered by the terms and conditions of employment of the Scottish Executive and by its Disability Equality Scheme. A central response on these recommendations has, therefore, been provided separately.

Recommendation 97

The Committee further recommends that—

- the campaign should be informed by available research on attitudes and, where a gap in available research is identified, the Scottish Executive should carry out or commission further research in that area;
- the Scottish Executive set long-term objectives for the campaign but build in realistic milestones to ensure that progress is being monitored;
the Scottish Executive include in its campaign personal success stories of disabled people both to increase the visibility of and to provide a wider set of attainable role models for disabled people;

- the Scottish Executive ensure that in all of the visual material it produces in all of the areas for which it has responsibility it includes images of disabled people to increase the visibility of and provide a wider set of attainable role models for disabled people;

- as part of the campaign, the Scottish Executive should work closely with the Scottish media to encourage not only positive reporting in relation to disability issues, but also to encourage the media to take advantage of opportunities to include positive role models for disabled people in all of its work;

- the Scottish Executive ensure that the Scottish administration and all of its agencies are clear and consistent in transmitting the message of the need for equal opportunities for disabled people in all of its work.

In those cases where Transport Scotland produces documents the issue of including representative images of disabled people will be considered.

Recommendation 102

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive develop a coherent and comprehensive strategy for achieving equality of mobility for disabled people across Scotland.

Through the implementation of the National Transport Strategy, Transport Scotland will be happy to participate in the development of a strategy for achieving equality of mobility for disabled people across Scotland. Transport Scotland will ensure that the work that it is supporting on improving the accessibility of the rail and trunk roads networks is an integral part of this.

Recommendation 107

In order to ensure that the accessibility considerations are included from the outset, The Committee recommends that disabled people be actively involved in the strategic development, design and implementation and monitoring of all transport services across Scotland.

Transport Scotland has established a Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum which meets quarterly with stakeholders to discuss how the rail sector in Scotland supports disabled people, development of standards, and Transport Scotland’s programme of work relating to improving access to the rail network. This forum includes disability representative organisations and the rail industry.

Transport Scotland has established a Roads for All Forum to bring together Transport Scotland engineering staff, disabled groups, Police and road
transport operators. The Forum will review policies and standards and help to establish priorities and monitor and review progress in addressing the Actions within the Trunk Roads Action Plan.

Progress during 2007:

Both groups have met regularly. The Scottish Rail Accessibility Forum has met five times since November 2006. The Roads for All Forum This forum has met fou times since January 2007. The Mobility Access Committee Scotland (MACS) is invplved in both of these groups and is also provides additional advice where necessary.

Recommendation 108

The Service Quality and Incentive Regime should be amended to include the full range of accessibility issues at the earliest opportunity.

Transport Scotland is continuing to look for opportunities to review the aspects of service quality associated with accessibility covered by the Service Quality and Incentive Regime (SQUIRE). A review would consider what could be added to SQUIRE based on what facilities and services are provided by First ScotRail and whether there were appropriate tests available to measure delivery. However, as SQUIRE is part of the ScotRail Franchise, a change to SQUIRE would be a variation to this contract and would need to be formally processed and any additional cost would require to be met.

Progress during 2007:

Under the Service Quality Incentive Regime, there are a number of checks of First ScotRail’s services and facilities that relate to information provision and accessibility. Service Quality Inspectors visit each First ScotRail station at least once and inspect approximately 200 trains every four weeks. The checks that they perform at stations include:

- hearing aid induction loops at ticket offices are operational,
- lighting is working correctly
- the nearest station with access for mobility-impaired customers is listed at each station in an appropriate location
- public announcement systems work correctly
- both audible and visible customer information systems work correctly
- cars parked in disabled parking pays have a valid “blue badge” ticket
- lifts and escalators are operating correctly and help points are fully functionally.

The checks performed during train journeys include:

- lighting is working correctly
- public address systems are working
• on train passenger information display screens are working including associated announcement where applicable
• interchange announcements are made before specified stations
• trains carry a wheelchair ramp.

In addition, during 2007, Transport Scotland has performed additional checks of:

• wheelchair spaces on trains to ensure that these are left in the default position i.e. available to wheelchair users
• checks at stations to ensure the accessibility information provided by First ScotRail to ensure that it accurately describes the situation and is easily understood.

Recommendation 109

SE and agencies work with ORR and NR to develop a strategy in relation to the accessibility of railway stations in Scotland which need more than minor alterations to improve accessibility for disabled people.

Disability Discrimination Act issues relating to the rail network were reserved to Westminster under the Railways Act 2005. As a result Transport Scotland is engaged in the Department for Transport’s Railways for All Strategy which was launched in March 2006.

Recommendation 110

SE should identify suitable targets for an effective programme of railway station improvements across Scotland to make all railways stations accessible within a specific timescale and against which progress can be measured.

Network Rail has been allocated a budget of around £4 million a year to upgrade stations in Scotland through the GB wide Access for All fund, and the stations in Scotland are identified by Transport Scotland. The first six to go through the process are Motherwell, Dalmuir, Kirkcaldy, Mount Florida, Rutherglen Stirling.

Transport Scotland is currently assessing which stations can be developed over the next few years in order to improve accessibility through the GB wide Access for All Programme. However many of the stations in the UK were constructed over 100 years ago with quite difficult engineering challenges to overcome in order to provide step-free access for people with reduced mobility. It will be impossible to make some stations fully accessible; however through the ScotRail franchise alternative arrangements for disabled people have been put in place.
Progress during 2007:

During 2007 two further stations — Barrhead and Cupar - were added to the programme in Scotland. As a result the eight Scottish stations which have been identified for improvements through the Access for All scheme are: Barrhead, Cupar, Dalmuir, Kirkcaldy, Motherwell, Mount Florida, Rutherglen and Stirling.

The aim is to create an unobstructed and obstacle free ‘accessible route’ within each station, from at least one station entrance, to each platform, and between platforms served by passenger trains. Work on these is due to be completed by March 2009.

Transport Scotland will be consulting with the rail industry and disabled groups in 2008 on how to allocate the Access for All funding for the years 2009-2015.

Recommendation 111

Where improvements are insufficient, additional funding should be made available by the SE.

DDA is a reserved mailer and therefore the responsibility for station improvements to facilitate disabled access lies with the Secretary of State for Transport.

Recommendation 112

The Committee recommends that Transport providers be encouraged to make their transport fleets accessible ahead of the deadlines provided for in legislation and that relevant assistance be made available to support this process by national or local government as applicable.

Westminster, through the Department for Transport is responsible for setting the legal requirements concerning the accessibility of rail vehicles. All new rail vehicles introduced since 1 January 1999 have to ensure minimum standards of accessibility as set out in the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and all existing vehicles are required to be made fully accessible by 2020. When existing vehicles are being refurbished the opportunity will be taken to upgrade the areas being refurbished to improve their accessibility.

Progress during 2007:

Using the Small Rail Project Fund, announced in 2006, Transport Scotland has funded refurbishment to two diesel multiple unit (DMU) classes, 166 and 158. The Transport Scotland funding for this refurbishment totalled £11.9m. The Class 156 programme was completed on 15th November 2007 on 40 vehicles, with all vehicles now in service. The Class 158 programme is ongoing with 10 vehicles in service; the remaining 40 vehicles in the programme are expected to be completed by June 2008.
As part of the design and planning of this refurbishment, full consideration of the Rail Vehicle Accessibility Regulations (RVAR) was taken, and as many aspects as possible relating to these were included in the specifications.

As a result these improvements have included the provision of a dedicated wheelchair space in Class 156 vehicles and tonal contrasting throughout both Class 156 and 158 interiors. First ScotRail have also installed audio I visual passenger information systems to the standards required by RVAR.

Recommendation 113

All transport providers should provide and promote effective pre-journey information which makes clear the accessibility level and any necessary accessibility arrangements of the services they provide.

As part of their licence agreement First ScotRail publish a Disabled Persons Protection Policy (DPPP) which provides details of the accessibility of stations and the services that they have put in place to support disabled customers. The Department for Transport is responsible for approving this document and consult with Transport Scotland officials.

Progress during 2007:

The DPPP is reviewed and approved annually. Prior to this year's review Transport Scotland conducted checks at stations to ensure the accessibility information provided by First ScotRail accurately describes the situation and is easily understood. The accessibility descriptions in the Appendices of the DPPP were then updated to reflect any changes identified.

Recommendation 114

Information provided by Transport Operators should be in plain English and a comprehensive range of alternative formats.

The Code of Practice on Train and Station Services for Disabled Passengers sets out the guidelines for the provision of information to disabled travellers. The First ScotRail DPPP is available in alternative formats on request.

Recommendation 115

Travel information should also be made available in real-time in accessible formats to support disabled people while travelling and travel information providers should link their information systems to those of other operators to assist whole-journey planning.

Transport Scotland will, through a process of continuous improvement, continue to develop the various travel information services which it either provides directly i.e. Traffic Scotland/Freight Scotland as well as those which it supports as a significant funder and stakeholder i.e. Traveline Scotland and Transport Direct.
Traffic Scotland assists in achieving this objective in a number of ways:

- Real time traffic information and journey time planning information is available via its web site www.trafficscotland.org.uk as is information on current and planned roadworks, weather, incidents, park and ride facilities and events. A text only version is also provided on the site. Variable message signs on the road also give incident, delay and journey time information as appropriate. This is also available via handheld devices such as WAP enabled mobiles and PDA devices.
- Through Traveline Scotland information on public transport options are available “on the move” from a call centre and via text messaging and via their website which also includes a web version of the call centre journey planner.

Traffic Scotland also links to the UK wide Transport Direct which gives detailed information on all modes of transport and journey times which are also available via a web site.

**Recommendation 116**

The Committee recommends that all staff involved in the planning and provision of transport services attend Disability Equality Training.

Under the franchise, First ScotRail has introduced a training programme on awareness of the issues facing disabled users of the rail network. All new staff are trained on disability awareness.

Transport Scotland will consider this recommendation in relation to its own staff. Sessions on disability awareness were provided in conjunction with the SE Transport Group in the autumn of 2006. In addition under the Trunk Road Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan, Transport Scotland will sponsor and support the introduction of an appropriate training programme for all Transport Scotland Trunk Road staff. This will include general disability awareness training and specific technical training for staff directly involved in design decisions.

**Progress during 2007:**

First ScotRail is committed to providing all staff with training in the specific issues and needs of the disabled and in specific accessibility procedures appropriate for the job that they are doing.

All new entrants and newly promoted staff receive vocational training which includes a disability and equality awareness module delivered by DeafBlind Scotland and Capability Scotland. All First ScotRail customer facing staff receive a refresher on handling ramps/wheelchairs as part of their competence management activity. First ScotRail has also programmed training for all its staff during 2008 utilising a DVD provided by the Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC).
Developing a programme of disability awareness training for all Transport Scotland staff has been included in the current business plan. Work is currently being carried out to plan this training, which will include general disability awareness training for all staff and specific technical training for staff directly involved in design decisions.

Recommendation 118

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive should encourage all transport providers to implement, in partnership with disabled people and access panels, suitable monitoring programmes to ensure that Disability Equality Training has the desired impact on service delivery for disabled travellers. Transport Scotland manage the ScotRail franchise. First ScotRail has recently carried out a mystery shopping exercise to assess the services provided to disabled people and commissioned research to gain a greater understanding of the challenges faced by those with special needs in using public transport and First ScotRail services in particular. Transport Scotland will continue to support this work.

Progress during 2007:

First ScotRail, working with the Disability Rights Commission conducted a survey on travel for disabled people and held a conference to discuss the results as part of the Go-Joe campaign. Following this First ScotRail have commissioned some further research and are now considering how to take the recommendations forward.

Recommendation 122

The Committee welcomes the fact that inspectors of the concessionary fare scheme will note down evidence of accessibility issues on buses as this will offer a useful source of information to bus operators regarding accessibility issues on their services the Committee recommends that Transport Scotland collate the evidence collected and pass it on to bus operators as a matter of course to assist operators to improve the accessibility of their services where possible

Transport Scotland is aware of this recommendation and has noted this for implementation once a survey resource is in place.

Progress during 2007:

The survey is currently being scoped and this is being considered as part of a review of the survey remit.
Recommendation 125

The Committee recommends that the equalities criteria included in tender documents for transport services should be developed in conjunction with disabled people and the subsequent services monitored and evaluated against these criteria in consultation with the disabled travellers who use the services. This should also be the case for those projects where the procurement is undertaken by a project sponsor.

The First ScotRail franchise will run until 2011 with a possible extension until 2014. When it is due for re-tendering the issues raised will be considered.

Transport Scotland follows the Scottish Executive procurement guidelines. Our works contracts and consultancy agreements contain provisions in respect of discrimination in employment such that contractors and service providers shall not discriminate unlawfully in any matter relating to discrimination in employment.

Transport Scotland is required by the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG), to ensure that funding and approval for accessibility issues are adequately appraised. MACS is involved in all consultation and tendering processes which affect the transport options for people with disabilities, in their advisory capacity to Scottish Ministers.

Progress during 2007:

The STAG process is currently being refreshed. As part of this, advice on the need to ensure that funding and approval for accessibility issues are adequately appraised, has been included within the process.

Recommendation 127

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive develop and promote suitable mechanisms for the effective enforcement of proper use of accessible parking for disabled people wherever it exists including encouraging local authorities to make full use of Traffic Regulation Orders.

A report concerning the use of disabled parking spaces at Scottish stations is produced every six months as part of the Franchise Agreement. The SQUIRE regime is used to check whether non badge-holders use these spaces inappropriately.

Recommendation 134

The Committee recommends that the Scottish Executive should be a best practice provider of alternative formats.
Transport Scotland publications are available in alternative formats on request.

Recommendation 138

The Committee further recommends that public sector organisations ensure that they clearly publicise details of the accessibility of their services to ensure that those service users who may have individual access requirements are fully aware of what is available to them.

Transport Scotland is committed to providing its services to all. Working with our contractors and franchise holders we will consider ways in which to improve awareness of services available.