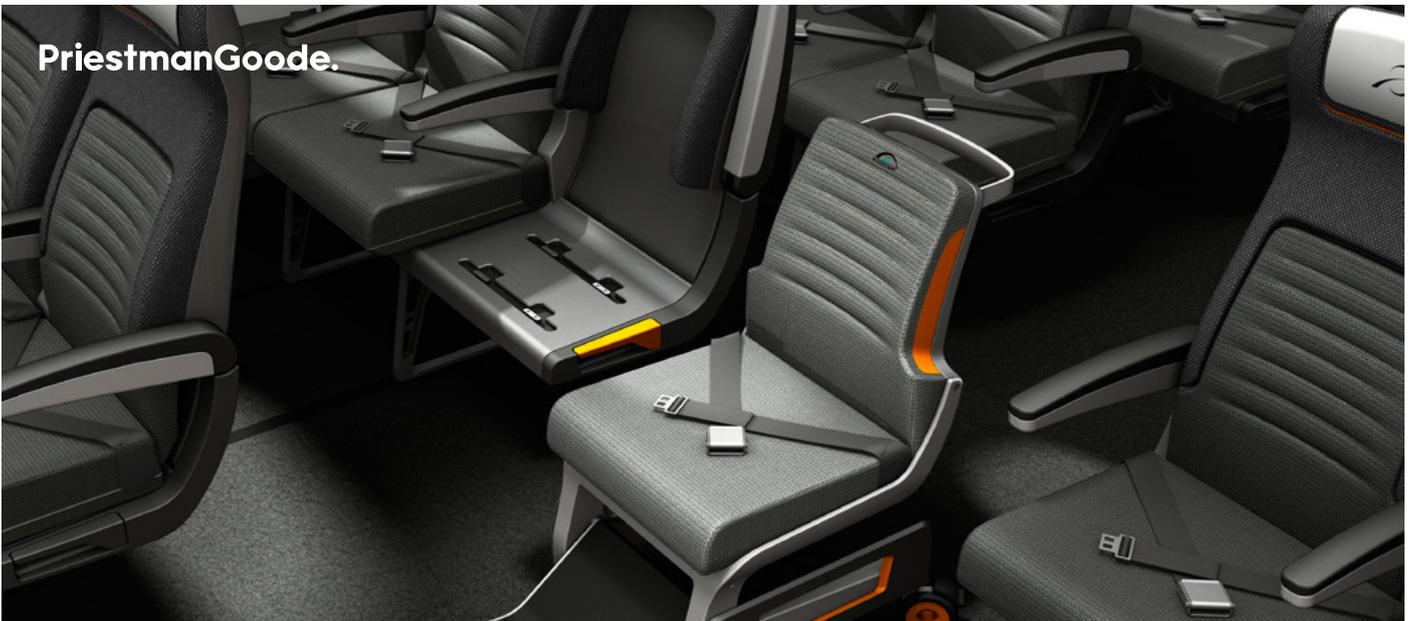


PriestmanGoode.



Britain's leading transport designers unveil the future of accessible air travel

[Watch the animation here](#)

Following the most successful Paralympic Games ever, we consider the legacy that the games will leave for disabled travellers around the world. Britain's leading transport designers, PriestmanGoode, have unveiled a design that will transform air travel for passengers with reduced mobility (PRMs).

Air Access is a concept that facilitates air travel for PRMs by enabling an easier transition from gate to aircraft. The ingenious design aims to reduce the indignity and discrimination that PRMs face when travelling by air. Paul Priestman, founding director of PriestmanGoode, explains: "We have been designing aircraft interiors for over fifteen years and always work to improve the entire passenger journey, from home to destination. At present there are some accessibility regulations on aircraft, however they cater for only the most basic requirements. As a result, passengers with special needs often face considerable difficulties when travelling by air."

"These difficulties generally go unnoticed – very few members of the public are aware of the anxiety and discomfort PRMs can experience when travelling. But it is a matter of equality that people with reduced mobility should have the same rights to a quality passenger experience that able-bodied people have." Priestman continues "As designers we strive to improve things, not just for the immediate future, but for the long-term. A demographic shift is sweeping across Europe: the population is ageing, life expectancy is increasing, obesity levels are rising and PRMs account for a larger proportion of the population than ever before. Air Access is a much-needed concept for the future of airline travel that will provide a pleasant experience for passengers with disabilities or reduced mobility."

Jennifer Howitt Browning, assistant coach of the women's Paralympic Wheelchair Basketball team and former Paralympian comments: "Air Access is a fantastic idea and an ideal initiative for prompting the dialogue on how to make air travel accessible for passengers with disabilities."

"I have heard of too many cases in which airline passengers have been made to feel like second-rate citizens, which is both distressing and demotivating. I know this only too well. I travel by air frequently and at times it has been an ordeal. I applaud any initiative that tries to tackle this problem, and hope that Air Access will stimulate constructive discussions between airlines, airports, seat vendors and disability bodies."



Why do we need Air Access?

Currently, around 20% of the UK's adult population has some form of disability or mobile difficulty. For this demographic air travel can be fraught with problems.

Ground and airline staff are often inadequately trained and unaware of their legal obligations. The absence of a systematic process for boarding and disembarking PRMs can lead to confusion and complications for airline staff. For PRMs, being physically assisted into and out of airplane seats can be stressful and demeaning, and in-flight toileting can be difficult. It's imperative that we start thinking today about implementing change to cater for future generations of air travellers.

How it works

The Air Access concept consists of two elements: a detachable wheelchair by which passengers can be transported onto and off of the plane, and a fixed-frame aisle seat on the aircraft into which the wheelchair is mated to create a regular airline seat.

1. Ground services staff assist the passenger into the Air Access wheelchair seat in the departure gate or on the jet-way, where there is ample space to manoeuvre.
2. When seated, the passenger is wheeled onto the plane.
3. Once on-board, the wheelchair's 360-degree pivoting wheels enable it to be slid sideways into the fixed-frame aisle seat without the passenger needing to get up.
4. When the two elements are positioned, they are locked together for the duration of the flight.
5. On arrival, ground staff simply unlock the wheelchair seat, slide it out into the aisle and wheel the passenger to the jet-way or arrival gate.
6. Once there, the passenger returns to his or her own wheelchair or zimmer frame, or transfers into the airport's wheelchair.



Benefits of Air Access

The Air Access seat could be installed in every aisle seat of the aircraft. In a wide-body this would be four seats per row, meaning dozens of PRMs could travel on any given flight. This is particularly useful when large groups of passengers with reduced mobility travel together e.g. paralympic athletes.

- Increased safety for passengers. Passengers do not need to be handled by airline staff in the tight confines of the aircraft.
- Easier to use toilet facilities in flight. Passengers only need assistance to unlock their seat and wheel to the nearest toilet.
- The chair has a removable seat pad. Many passengers with serious disabilities, for instance spinal injuries, need to sit on their own purpose-designed cushions. Passengers can customise the Air Access seat to suit their individual needs.
- Anyone can sit in the seat. As the access seat integrates seamlessly into the aircraft, the airline does not lose seating space if there are no PRMs travelling.
- The Air Access concept is suitable for all aircraft types, though offers particular benefits to long haul, wide body aircraft—both for passenger experience and cost benefit to airlines.



NOTES TO EDITORS

About PriestmanGoode

PriestmanGoode is a design consultancy that specialises in delivering exceptional brand experiences for a roster of leading international companies.

Using design as a strategic tool to transform businesses, we use our unique global viewpoint to deliver solutions that are tailored to place brands and cultures on the world stage, helping our clients achieve holistic brand experiences and customer loyalty.

From aircraft interiors, airports, public transport and high speed trains to hotels and consumer products, our diverse portfolio enables us to draw from our experience across different sectors to deliver new innovations. This unique way of thinking has led us to become brand and innovation partners with a number of leading companies around the world.

Our designs are about people: from end users to maintenance staff, they are used by millions every year. We're interested in how things work and how to improve them. We believe great design should be simple, elegant, intuitive, easy to maintain and efficient to manufacture.

Our company is steeped in the tradition of great British design, but our experience over the years, our interest in the new and our ambition to redefine expectations of great design has led us to become leaders in our field. We define future trends and are at the forefront of global design today.

www.PriestmanGoode.com

About Jennifer Howitt Browning

Jennifer Howitt Browning is the Programmes Development Manager at Motivation, an international development charity supporting people with mobility disabilities. A former Paralympic athlete, Jennifer competed in Sydney in 2000 and Athens in 2004, where she won a Gold medal with the women's Basketball team.

She is currently assistant coach to the GB Women's Paralympic Wheelchair Basketball Team. At Motivation, Jennifer manages a large portfolio of international development projects. Her work involves a significant amount of overseas travel.

www.motivation.org.uk

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