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BLUEBOX AND VIRGIN ATLANTIC LAUNCH FIRST FLEET-WIDE ACCESSIBLE IFE PLATFORM FOR PASSENGERS WITH SIGHT LOSS

Bluebox's accessible IFE (aIFE™) solution is the first portable IFE platform developed with and for airline passengers with visual impairments

Dunfermline, UK – 27 November 2017 – Bluebox Aviation Systems Ltd. has launched an accessible IFE (aIFE™) platform which will take to the air with Virgin Atlantic on 1 December 2017, entertaining passengers with visual impairments aboard flights serving destinations across North America, the Caribbean, Africa, China, India and the Middle East. This makes Virgin Atlantic the first global airline to make IFE accessible for passengers with sight loss across its entire fleet.

Bluebox worked closely with long-standing customer Virgin Atlantic and representatives from The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (Guide Dogs) in the development of the platform to ensure that both the airline's and users' needs were met.

Mark Anderson, Executive Vice President - Customer at Virgin Atlantic, commented: "Nearly thirty years ago, Virgin Atlantic was the first airline to offer seat back entertainment in all cabins, so it's apt that we should be the first to ensure our entertainment is fully accessible across all flights. Working with Bluebox and Guide Dogs we've been able to create a world first that ensures customers with sight loss can experience the full range of onboard entertainment including the latest blockbusters, TV shows and albums."

"We distilled the most critical elements of our Bluebox Ai IFE platform into a simple design that someone with sight loss can easily and consistently navigate, enriching this with additional background functionality," said James Macrae, CTO, Bluebox Aviation Systems Ltd. and contributor to the IFE Accessibility Working Group (ACCESSWG) of the Airline Passenger Experience Association (APEX). "For example, rather than using a traditional screen reader function to read out on-screen text, information like film synopses are read out after a single tap of the film title. By putting these in the background, we kept the interface uncluttered and simple to navigate, but still providing information to help the passenger choose their selection."

John Welsman, Policy Business Partner for Travel and Transport for the charity Guide Dogs, said: "We know that something as simple as an in-flight entertainment system with voice overs and audio descriptions will help passengers with sight loss to enjoy flights just like anyone else on board. As someone with sight loss who flies quite often myself, I think it'll be wonderful to access entertainment and information on Virgin Atlantic planes without needing to ask for help. Not having to call for cabin crew, or disturb fellow passengers around me who might be sleeping, will be great."

Through Virgin Atlantic's relationship with the charity, Bluebox was introduced to a group of individuals with a range of visual impairments – from partial sight loss to total blindness. This group worked closely with both Virgin Atlantic and Bluebox providing input and feedback through multiple stages of the development process.

At the end of the development, one user commented that what they liked most about the platform was: "First, that you asked us for feedback, and second, that you updated it based on our recommendations – you really listened to us."

"Our user group's enthusiastic involvement in the development process revealed very quickly to us that this project went far beyond functional design elements, but would have a huge impact on their overall passenger experience – offering them independence and control, as well as entertainment," said Catherine Brown, Head of Marketing, Bluebox Aviation Systems Ltd. "Gathering relevant input is fundamental to good product design. But helping to deliver those more intangible benefits of accessible IFE? That's made this project extremely satisfying for Bluebox."

For airlines, Bluebox aIFE provides a more advanced and radically lower-cost solution than the alternative of updating seat-back or other IFE systems, and can do so across mixed fleets with different IFE systems, enabling an airline to quickly surpass the initial goals of forthcoming government legislation on accessible IFE provision. The platform is a fully-customised iPad-based user interface that builds upon the well-recognised and highly advanced accessibility features of Apple's iOS platform, such as VoiceOver and Zoom, but enhances these for the unique requirements of IFE, including:

- Controls and menus that are easy to detect and navigate for different types of sight loss;
- Support for multiple languages, closed captions, and audio-described content;
- All the security of the original Hollywood-approved Bluebox Ai platform, providing users access to Early Window Content.

About Bluebox Aviation Systems Ltd. (www.blueboxaviation.com)

Bluebox Aviation Systems Ltd. specialises in the provision of software solutions to the aviation industry.

The Bluebox in-flight entertainment (IFE) portfolio provides airlines the latest technology in tablet-based and wireless IFE solutions (fitted and portable) as cost-effective alternatives to seatback IFE systems, and exploits these platforms to address a range of IFE requirements:

service enhancement, service recovery, accessible IFE (for passengers with hearing and visual impairments) and ancillary revenue generation.

Headquartered in Dunfermline, Scotland, Bluebox Aviation Systems serves over 40 airlines and aircraft operators across the globe, and has a global support network in Europe, the US, Australia and Singapore.

About Virgin Atlantic (www.virginatlantic.com)

Virgin Atlantic was founded by entrepreneur Sir Richard Branson 33 years ago with innovation and customer service at its core. Today Virgin Atlantic carries 5.5 million customers annually, and was recently named the UK's favourite long-haul carrier by Skytrax.

Headquartered in London, Virgin Atlantic employs over 9,000 people worldwide and operates a fleet of 39 aircraft serving 26 destinations across four continents. Alongside joint venture partner Delta Air Lines they operate the leading transatlantic network - offering up to 39 flights per day between the UK and US with onward connections to over 200 US and international cities.

This year Virgin Atlantic will become the first airline in Europe to be fully Wi-Fi connected, and in 2019 will take delivery of their first Airbus A350-100 aircraft - helping to transform the fleet into one of the quietest and most fuel efficient in the sky.

About Guide Dogs (www.guidedogs.org.uk)

The Guide Dogs for the Blind Association (working name Guide Dogs) is a British charity founded in 1934. Headquartered in Berkshire, UK, Guide Dogs helps people with sight loss across the UK by providing guide dogs, mobility and other rehabilitation services. Guide Dogs wants everyone who experiences sight loss to be able to live their lives the way they choose and feel confident, independent and supported in the world. Find out more at guidedogs.org.uk.

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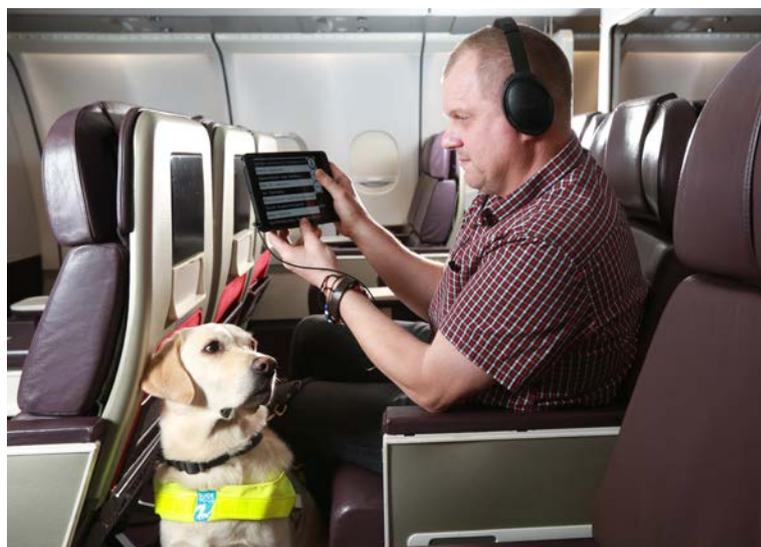
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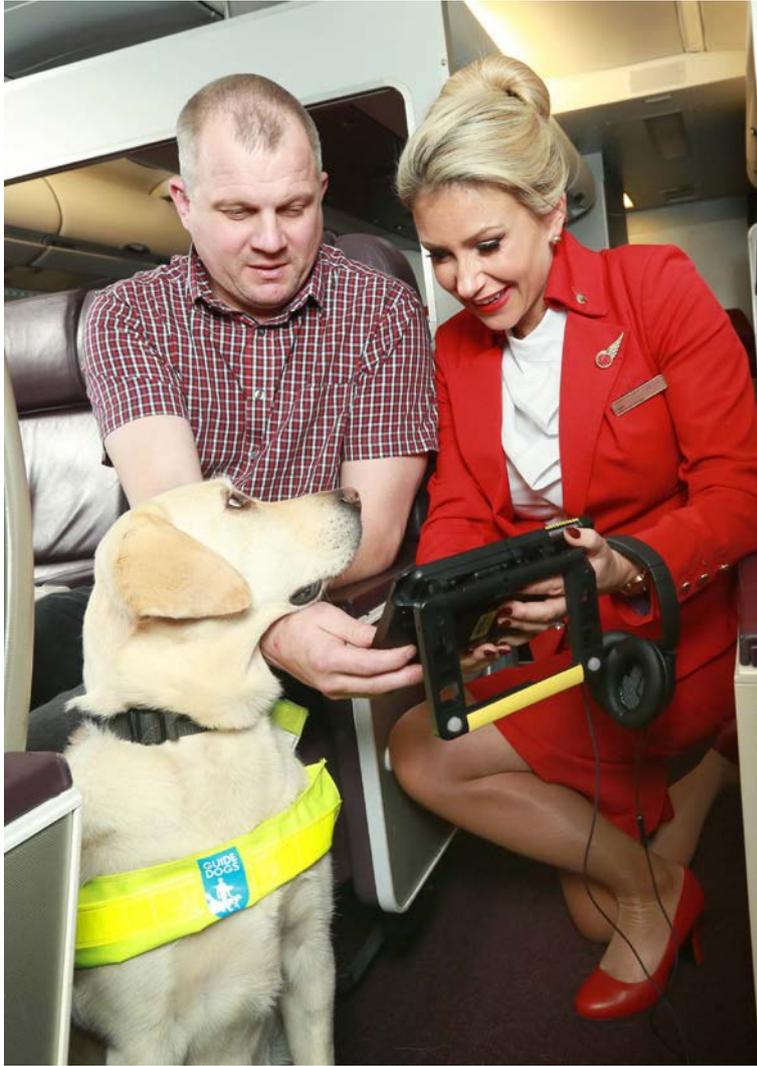
Bluebox aIFE user interface - content selection

Image: Bluebox Aviation Systems



Bluebox aIFE for passengers with sight loss on board all Virgin Atlantic flights

Image: Virgin Atlantic - Matt Alexander/PA Wire



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