## **GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM**

Minutes of Meeting No. 72 Held on Wednesday, 2 April 2014 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

#### Attendees:

Mr Alan Walker Forum Chairman
Cllr Adam Newton Belfast City Council

Cllr John Montgomery North Down Borough Council
Mr Mark Doherty Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mrs Julie Allen Belfast City Council

Mr Andrew Irvine Belfast City Centre Management

Mr Jonny Currie East Belfast Community Development Agency

Mr Scott Kennerley Northern Ireland Consumer Council

Dr Colm McNamee Park Road and District Residents' Association

Mr Raymond Hall Holywood Residents' Association
Mr Terry Hoey Palmerstown Residents' Association
Mr Brian Ambrose George Best Belfast City Airport

Observers:

Mr Martin Gillespie Department for Regional Development

In attendance:

Miss Laura Duggan Forum Secretary

## 1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Tom Haire Belfast City Council

Mr Christopher McFerran Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association

Mr John Moore Belfast Chamber of Commerce

Mrs Lisa Toland Belfast City Council

Mr Gordon Wright Holywood Residents' Association

Capt. Harry Brady Aer Lingus Base Captain

Mr Andrew Patterson Northern Ireland Tourist Board

Mr Walker welcomed all present to the meeting including Mr Martin Gillespie from the Department for Regional Development who is taking over from Dr Andrew Grieve as the Forum representative and Mr Raymond Hall from Holywood Residents' Association, standing in for Mr Gordon Wright who was unable to attend the meeting.

## 2. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2014

The Chairman noted that the minutes had been revised following initial distribution to take account of proposed amendments from Mr Kennerley.

Members agreed that the revised minutes represented an accurate record of the meeting.

## 3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

#### 4. MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2013

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed by Members as an accurate record.

#### 5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

## 6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Ambrose delivered an update to Members on the following:

#### 6.1 Business Performance

GBBCA had one of its busiest years in the Airport's history in 2013 with passenger numbers up 13% to just over 2.5 million. The business continues to perform well in the first quarter of 2014 with passenger numbers of 3% on the previous year.

## 6.2 Commercial

Boots have recently opened a health and beauty concession in the departure lounge which is performing well to date.

In response to feedback from airport users including Forum Members, GBBCA has invested circa £90K to provide free unlimited Wi-Fi throughout the terminal building.

## 6.3 Capital Expenditure

Various projects are planned for 2014 including the installation of anti-backtrack doors between airside and landside areas, the provision of enhanced X-ray screening equipment for baggage, and the replacement of the Airport's existing fire tenders. Approximately £1m of capital expenditure has been budgeted for projects in 2014.

#### 6.4 Car Park

A comprehensive plan for enhancing the Airport's car parks has been prepared by the senior management team which is to be presented to the Airport's Board for consideration next week. The plan includes the physical refurbishments as well as a pricing restructure.

## **6.5 Executive Lounges**

British Airways recently unveiled its new business lounge at the Airport at an opening ceremony attended by Willie Walsh, Chief Executive of British Airways' parent company, International Airlines Group. This new lounge as well as the six rotations per day service to/from London Heathrow demonstrates British Airways' ongoing commitment to its customers in Northern Ireland.

In addition, the existing Flybe business lounge is to be taken over by Swissport, one of the worlds' leading providers of ground and cargo services to the aviation industry. The new Swissport lounge will be accessible by existing subscribers as well as on a pay-per-use basis.

#### 6.6 General Aviation

General Aviation services at GBBCA have been taken over by Avfuel after the existing service provider Eurojet went into administration earlier this year. The transition between service providers has gone smoothly with minimal disruption to date.

#### 6.7 Tourism

Northern Ireland will be hosting the opening stages of the Giro d'Italia in May this year. Over 200 of the world's top professional cyclists will be in Northern Ireland to compete and 775 million spectators are expected to watch live coverage of the event. This will help to further raise the profile of Northern Ireland following a number of successful international events taking place here over the past few years. GBBCA will be working with tourism bodies to support the event and will be hosting inbound participants and spectators.

Mr Ambrose accepted questions from Forum Members regarding the Chief Executive's report.

Mr Hoey requested further information on the proposed car park enhancements. Mr Ambrose responded that he would be happy to circulate details once the proposals have been approved.

Mr Hoey queried if there are plans for a hotel at the GBBCA site. Mr Ambrose responded that while the Airport has secured planning permission for such a development, there are no plans to progress with this at the current time.

Mr Hoey queried if a food and beverage retail unit would be opened in the Arrivals Hall for use by passengers travelling into Belfast. Mr Ambrose responded that Costa Coffee currently provides such a service. The addition of a convenience store in the Arrivals Hall would be desirable but this would be dependent on further growth in terms of passenger numbers at the Airport.

Cllr Montgomery welcomed the provision of free Wi-Fi at the Airport. He also queried if the business lounge soon to be opened by Swissport is an indication of a new route to be offered at the Airport. Mr Ambrose responded that this is not the case but that Servisair, one of the ground handling providers at the Airport, had planned to take over operation of the existing Flybe business lounge and Servisair have now been acquired by Swissport.

Cllr Newton queried if the anti-backtrack doors to be installed at the Airport could result in passengers becoming trapped if they try to back track. Mr Ambrose responded that the doors are in common use throughout the UK and the doors prevent back-tracking but allow exit in one direction only.

Mr Hoey asked Mr Ambrose if the installation of anti-backtrack doors could result in job losses in the security team. Mr Ambrose responded that he didn't believe this would be the case but that the security staff would be redeployed to other areas in the Airport.

Mr Hoey queried if the Airport has been affected by flooding and if flooding at the site would impact on the Inverary area. Mr Ambrose responded that a recent flood risk assessment had been carried out for the Airport and that he didn't believe the Airport is at risk in this respect.

Mr Walker congratulated GBBCA on the introduction of a free Wi-Fi service and noted that Wi-Fi provision had been discussed by the Forum previously.

In relation to the recent announcement by British Airways that it will be moving its Belfast-Heathrow service from Terminal 1 to Terminal 5, from the end of October this year, Mr Walker queried what GBBCA is doing to make passengers aware of this. Mr Ambrose responded that GBBCA has placed this information on its website and on social media and it would recommunicate the information closer to the time of the move.

## 7. AIRPORT STATISTICS

Mr Ambrose gave an update on the Forum Reports which were circulated to Members in advance of the meeting – as follows:

- Historical summary of movements post 21:30 hrs
- Analysis of delays post 21:30 hrs
- Bias of flights over Belfast Lough
- Analysis of movements post 23:00 hrs local
- Movements by aircraft type
- Analysis of noise related concerns
- CR Summary

Mr Ambrose noted that much of this information is available on the GBBCA website and that he was able to direct a Member of Parliament to it recently.

Regarding aircraft types, Mr Ambrose advised Members that as part of recent restructuring in Flybe, they will be moving to six based turboprop aircraft at GBBCA from the summer 2014 season. Cllr Montgomery queried if this represented a shift in strategy for Flybe as they had previously planned a rolling replacement of the Dash-8 Q400 turboprop with Embraer 175 jet aircraft. Mr Ambrose responded that this may now be a longer term strategy for Flybe once they have been able to consolidate growth following the recent changes that have been made at the airline.

Mr Hoey queried how the Airport's apprenticeship scheme was progressing. Mr Ambrose responded that it has progressed very well to date. The Airport currently has two apprentices within its Administration department, one in HR and one in Customer Services. The Director of HR and Corporate Responsibility has been tasked with securing 10 apprenticeships across the Airport in 2014.

Mr Walker noted the reduction in the number of extensions on the Manchester route since the last report.

Mr Currie queried if the number of projects supported by the Airport's Community Fund (as per the CR Summary) is reflective of the number of applications received by the Airport. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport receives far more applications than those supported and a selection process is required that is carried out by the Airport's CR Team which meets bimonthly.

#### 8. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Report from the Environmental Sub Group on 3 March 2014 that had been circulated in advance of the meeting was noted by Members.

With regards to the Airport's 2013 Noise Contour Report, Mrs Allen, the Environmental Sub Group Chairperson, noted that there had been an increase in the size of the noise contours both in terms of area (km²) and population within the contours between the 2012 and 2013 reporting period.

Mrs Allen highlighted that as part of its Noise Action Plan 2013-18, the Airport is undertaking a review of Sound Insulation Grant Schemes (SIGS) at other UK airports to inform any potential future scheme at GBBCA as well as investigating the feasibility of introducing a Standard Instrument Departure (SID) for Runway 04 to enhance track keeping performance by airlines.

Mrs Allen accepted questions from Members on the Report from the Environmental Sub Group.

Mr Hoey requested further information in relation to the proposals for a SIGS at GBBCA. Mr Gillespie responded that the Department for Regional Development (DRD) are working with the Airport to develop a Sound Insulation Grant Scheme should it be required in the future if

properties fall above the threshold set out in UK Government guidance for airports to offer residential dwellings support for acoustic insulation.

Mr Hoey queried if acoustic insulation is stipulated in the planning conditions for new developments near airports. Mr Gillespie responded that he would think this to be the case. However, he didn't believe that GBBCA is currently a statutory consultee on proposed residential developments on the grounds of noise but rather for safeguarding purposes only. Mr Hoey suggested that it would be wise to have acoustic insulation stipulated in the planning conditions for new developments to protect the Airport from being liable in the future for the costs to insulate such developments which could in turn affect jobs at the Airport. Mr Gillespie responded that this would be a matter for DoE Planning Service to consider.

Mr Walker noted that under the future scenarios set out in the Airport's submission to DoE Planning Service in respect of its proposals to remove the SfS limit, the noise environment is expected to grow in the future and properties may fall above the threshold to be eligible for acoustic insulation.

#### 9. FORUM DEPUTY CHAIR

Mr Walker advised Members that following a call for nominations by the Forum Secretary for the position of Deputy Chair prior to this meeting, one enquiry had been received but no nominations were put forward within the timescales.

Mr Walker advised that he had identified a potential candidate for the position, Ms Carol Edwards, former Head of Consumer Education & Skills at the Consumer Council. Before retiring, Ms Edwards worked with the Consumer Council for over 20 years and led a number of initiatives which resulted in very significant benefits for consumers across NI. In addition, Ms Edwards has been involved with various charitable and community organisations and has held a number of chair positions.

Mr Hoey queried if a Member of the disabled community could be sought for the position to give disabled people a voice at the Forum. Mr Walker noted that the position is open to any individual provided that they are not with an organisation in membership of the Forum and they meet the additional criteria for the position.

Mr Kennerley noted that the Consumer Council is the designated body in Northern Ireland to represent people with reduced mobility in respect of the EC Regulation concerning the rights of disabled persons and persons with reduced mobility when travelling by air. The Consumer Council engages with GBBCA in regards to its obligations, for example, through carrying out walking audits, to ensure that the needs of people with reduced mobility are catered for. The Consumer Council also engages with bodies such Disability Action and Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC). As such, people with reduced mobility have a voice at the Forum.

Mr Walker suggested that representation on the Forum could be looked at when membership is reviewed following the publication of the revised guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees.

A discussion took place on whether the timescales should be extended for nominations for the position of Deputy Chair, however, it was agreed not to do this but to proceed with considering the proposed candidate. As such, it was agreed that the Forum Chair would forward a summary of Ms Edwards experience to Members for consideration with a view to conducting a ballot at the next Forum meeting in June.

Action: Mr Walker

#### 10. AOB

## 10.1 Press coverage of Forum

Mr Walker noted the press coverage in January 2014 in relation to car parking issues at GBBCA and the application by BOAL for planning permission to operate a remote car park at IKEA. This coverage was not picked up by the Forum Chair at the time but was highlighted to him by a Member of the Forum subsequently as the article seemed to misrepresent the role of the Forum and gave a perception that the Forum had either discussed or taken a view on the BOAL planning application. The article also suggested that the Forum had no status and it potentially inferred that the Forum and its members were not independent.

Mr Walker advised Members that he did not have a press screening service in relation to the Forum but that he has since put in place measures to ensure that press coverage of the Forum would be highlighted to the Forum Secretary by the Airport's own press screening service moving forward and that the Forum Secretary would in turn notify the Forum Chair.

Mr Walker expressed the view that lobbying is a legitimate activity. However, he noted that the Forum did not discuss the BOAL application nor did it take a position on the matter. Furthermore, he noted that the Forum is a statutory body which is not appointed by the Airport and that councillors sitting on the Forum have been elected by a democratic process. Cllr Montgomery supported this point by saying the council advertises available positions on outside bodies every four years and councillors must apply for these positions. The full council must then vote on such appointments following applications being made.

In regards to the press article, Cllr Newton clarified for Members that he had asked for the application from BOAL to be deferred in February last year but that he had only become aware of the Airport's plans to extend its car park subsequent to this at the Forum meeting in March 2013.

Mr Ambrose stated that the Airport's position on the BOAL operation is clear. It is not opposed to competition per se but to the fact that BOAL is operating a remote car park at IKEA without planning permission.

# 10.2 DfT Informal Consultation: UK enforcement regime for EC Regulation No.1107/2006 concerning the rights of disabled persons and Persons with Reduced Mobility when travelling by air

Mr Kennerley summarised for the benefit of Members the proposed changes to the UK enforcement regime for EC Regulation 1107/2006. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) currently has criminal enforcement powers in respect of this Regulation. However, criminal enforcement can only be taken if a passenger has actually complained. Criminal proceedings are also costly and time consuming for both businesses and the CAA. As such, DfT are proposing to give civil enforcement powers to the CAA similar to those given to it under EC Regulation 261/2004 which relates to compensation and assistance that must be given to passengers in the event of being denied boarding, flight cancellations, or long delays of flights. Civil enforcement powers allow the CAA to take up compliance issues with the aviation industry and move to formal action only if the person in breach is unwilling to provide informal assurances as to future conduct. The CAA has found this to be more effective in improving compliance.

# 10.3 DfT Consultation on draft Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees

Mr Walker advised Members that as agreed at the special Forum Meeting on 13 February, he had responded to this consultation with a neutral position. Mr Walker noted that the Forum would be considering in more detail any updated guidelines issued by the Department for Regional Development, Northern Ireland for consultative committees in Northern Ireland.

## 10.4 CAA Strategic Plan 2014-16

Mr Walker advised Members that the CAA are consulting on their updated Strategic Plan out to 2016 as well as more detailed plans for three specific work areas: Safety, Consumer Programme and Environment. The consultations will run until 18 April 2014 and the documents are accessible on the CAA website.

Mr Kennerley advised Members that that Consumer Council will be responding to the consultation on the CAA's Consumer Programme and its response will be available on the Consumer Council website in due course.

## 10.5 Sam Thompson Bridge Opening

Mr Currie advised Members that a new bridge will be opening on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> April linking Victoria Park and Belfast's Harbour Estate as part of the Connswater Community Greenway project. The bridge is to be named in honour of the late Sam Thompson. Volunteers are being asked to walk over the bridge between 12-4pm on the day to mark the opening and prizes will be offered for the first people to do this. Mr Walker asked if Mr Currie could send the website link to the Forum Secretary following the meeting for onward circulation to Members.

**Action:** Mr Currie / Forum Secretary

# 11. DATE FOR 2014 MEETINGS

• Wednesday 25 June

• Wednesday 26 November