

**GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM**  
**Minutes of Meeting No 90**  
**Held on Wednesday 27 November 2019 at 7.00pm**  
**VENUE: Airport Administration Building**

**Attendees:**

Mr Alan Walker	Forum Chair
Mrs Carol Edwards	Forum Deputy Chair
Mrs Julie Allen	Belfast City Council, Environmental Health
Mr Alan Andrews	Hollywood Residents' Association
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mrs Dot Erskine	Tourism Northern Ireland
Alderman Tom Haire	Belfast City Council
Cllr John Kyle	Belfast City Council
Mr Hugh Larmour	Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Dr Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association
Mr Raymond McNair	George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA)
Mr Richard Williams	Consumer Council Northern Ireland

**In attendance:**

Ian Nuttall	Forum Secretary
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**1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

**Apologies:**

Ms Karen Boutros	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Cllr Gillian Greer	Ards and North Down Borough Council

Mr Walker welcomed Mrs Erskine to the Forum as a new member.

**2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2019**

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

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

None.

**4. AIRPORT DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

**4.1 Business Performance**

It was noted that GBBCA will commence a new service to London Southend Airport from 1 June 2020 with three daily flights. In addition, there will be an upgrade from Dash 8 to E190

aircraft on three of the six daily rotations on the London City Airport route. Following the recent purchase of Flybe it has been announced that the new airline name will be Virgin Connect. In keeping with high brand expectations, the airline is committed to showcasing GBBCA as an exemplar operation, with a focus on high levels of customer service and ease of journey through the Airport. Mr Williams welcomed the intention for GBBCA to become an exemplar airport.

Dr McCaughan asked if replacing turboprop aircraft with jets will lead to increased noise levels. Mr McNair explained that noise levels will remain well within the existing requirements of our Planning Agreement and will continue to reduce with future aircraft technological advancement.

Councillor Kyle asked if we should be planning for the business impacts of decreasing flight numbers due to increasing awareness of the climate change issue. Mr McNair explained that whilst GBBCA is conscious of this issue. No immediate impact is anticipated and longer term changes remain unclear. Mr McNair went on to explain that aviation only accounts for less than 2% of CO2 emissions. Dr McCaughan agreed with this and said that the aviation industry is often disproportionately blamed, given that it is not the main contributor to climate change.

Mrs Allen asked if Sustainable Aviation papers were circulated to Members following the Environmental Sub-group meeting in February. Members may request copies of the documents previously shared with the Forum from the Forum Secretary.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

#### **4.2 Capital Expenditure**

The two recently purchased state of the art fire tenders are now undergoing final testing with the manufacturers in Spain ahead of expected delivery in December 2019/early January 2020.

### **5. AIRPORT STATISTICS**

The Airport Statistics reports for the period August to October 2019 circulated to Members in advance of the meeting were as follows: Report 1: Historical summary of movements post 21:30 hours; Report 2: Delayed flights after 21:30 hours by time band; Report 3: Delayed flights after 21:30 hours by airline; Report 4: Delayed flights after 23:00 hours; Report 5: Flights over Belfast Lough; Report 6: Flights by aircraft type; Report 7: 2019 noise concerns; Report 8: Customer Insights Survey (CIS) Summary Results Q3 2019; and Appendix 1: GBBCA Corporate Responsibility Report.

Mr Walker invited questions on these reports.

Regarding Reports 1-3, Mr McNair noted the significant drop-off in delays in October and indicated that, based on initial figures, a further drop is expected in November. This may reflect recent discussions between GBBCA and Flybe/Virgin Connect on performance.

Mr Andrews asked why the Birmingham route had continued to present high numbers of delays; Mr McNair explained that the relatively large amount of traffic at Birmingham Airport can result in significant numbers of 'knock-on' issues which impact on departures from GBBCA.

Dr McCaughan asked what would be considered a reasonable level of delays; Mr McNair indicated that whilst ideally there would be no delays, a figure of 1-2% of departures would be reasonable to expect.

Regarding Report 7, Alderman Haire highlighted the predominance of noise concerns from the Newtownards Road area. Mr Nuttall explained that these have come via voicemail from a single resident with whom there has been an amicable ongoing exchange, mainly relating to flights after 21:30.

Regarding Report 8, Mrs Edwards, Mr Walker and Dr McCaughan referred to the relatively small number of respondents included in the Customer Insight Survey (particularly the low number responding to questions relating to car parking) and asked if there is an opportunity to survey a greater number of passengers including car park users. Mr McNair explained that the questions on parking are part of the overall survey and that the small number of responses to these reflects the proportion of passengers who park at the Airport. Mr McNair referred to proposed extensive changes to the current parking arrangements, suggesting that any revisions to the survey should be considered once these are in place.

Mrs Erskine asked if the survey captured information on the profile of respondents as this would be valuable from a tourism perspective. Mr Walker suggested that a meeting should be arranged between Mrs Erskine and the Airport to discuss opportunities to share tourism-related data.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

Regarding the GBBCA Corporate Responsibility Report, Mr Walker commended the Airport on its Corporate Responsibility activities. On behalf of the Forum, Mr Walker congratulated all GBBCA employees on achieving the Aviation Industry Airport of the Year award.

Councillor Kyle asked if the reported Community Fund spend was for one year – which Mr McNair confirmed. Councillor Kyle suggested that consideration should be given to supporting voluntary mental health services through the Fund. Mrs Edwards emphasised the link between mental health and homelessness, whilst Mr McNair referred to the Welcome Organisation who work with the homeless and are currently the Airport's charity of the year.

Mr Andrews noted that the community of Holywood benefited from the Best Kept Awards, winning runner-up in the Medium Town category this year.

Mr Walker referred to the photographs of Mitchell House School which were included in the Report – the school had been mentioned as a recent beneficiary of the Community Fund at the Forum meeting in September.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL SUB-GROUP REPORT**

The minutes from the Environmental Sub Group (ESG) meeting on 4 November circulated with the Forum papers, were noted by Members.

Mrs Allen asked Mr Nuttall if there had been any progress on the review of the R3 Noise Action Plan since the ESG meeting. Mr Nuttall confirmed that he had recently been in contact with Amy Holmes, DAERA about progress on the review, however the workload presented to the Department by Brexit has delayed this.

Mr Nuttall gave Members a summary of the track violations which occurred in the period July to September (departures on Runway 04 in both July and September had only achieved 93.3% and 90.5% compliance respectively) and explained the actions underway to reduce these, including providing airlines with the .kml files for each violation and meeting with airline representatives to discuss the issue.

Dr McCaughan asked if there had been any developments in relation to the implementation of SID (Standard Instrument Departure) at the Airport. It was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting. Dr McCaughan asked how successful the integration with NATs has been; Mr McNair explained that this has been very successful across a range of factors including the level of technical expertise, management availability, staff resourcing and training.

Mrs Allen offered her congratulations on behalf of the Environment Sub-group to the Airport on achieving the Airport of the Year award.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

## **7. APPOINTMENT/RECRUITMENT PROCESSES**

Mr Walker reminded Members that the Forum has exercised its right to extend his position as Chair until September 2020. Those present gave their approval for the Chair, Deputy Chair and Forum Secretary to commence the process to recruit a new Chair. It is expected that re-recruitment of community groups to the Forum (as agreed at the last Forum meeting) will be completed in advance of the new Chair taking up post.

**Action:** Forum Secretary, Forum Chair, Forum Deputy Chair

## **8. AOB**

Dr McCaughan asked for an update on the current situation regarding managing the impact of drones on airport operations. Mr McNair explained that GBBCA is very aware of the issue and that an appropriate protocol to deal with drone impact has been agreed and developed in partnership with Belfast Harbour and statutory bodies. Mr Larmour reminded Members that the Air Traffic Management and Unmanned Aircraft Bill is being progressed by the Department of Transport (although currently delayed due to the forthcoming election). Mr Larmour also advised Members, that as part of a re-organisation within the Department for Infrastructure, Tom Reid, Director of Public Transport Division, has been replaced by Jackie Robinson. Mrs Robinson has asked to attend the next Forum meeting – to which those present agreed.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

## **9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

March 2020, final date to be confirmed.

Signed:

Date:

Alan Walker (Forum Chair) AW/in