

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 74

Held on Wednesday 26th November 2014 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Attendees:

Mr Alan Walker	Forum Chair
Mrs Carol Edwards	Forum Deputy Chair
Cllr John Montgomery	North Down Borough Council
Ms Edel Mullan	Belfast City Council
Mrs Julie Allen	Belfast City Council
Mr John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Mr Jonny Currie	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Mr Gordon Wright	Holywood Residents' Association
Mr Terry Hoey	Palmerstown Residents' Association
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr Scott Kennerley	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
Mr Joe McGlade	Park Road and District Residents' Association
Mr Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport

Observers:

Mr Martin Gillespie	Department for Regional Development
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In attendance:

Miss Laura Duggan	Forum Secretary
Ms Jenny Robinson	Northern Ireland Consumer Council

1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Apologies were received from:

Cllr Adam Newton	Belfast City Council
Cllr Tom Haire	Belfast City Council
Mr Andrew Irvine	Belfast City Centre Management
Capt. Harry Brady	Aer Lingus Base Captain
Mrs Shelley Cleere	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Dr Colm McNamee	Park Road and District Residents' Association
Dr Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association

The Forum Chair welcomed all present to the meeting including Mr Joe McGlade from Park Road and District Residents' Association, standing in for Dr McNamee who was unable to attend the meeting, and Ms Jenny Robinson attending as an observer from Northern Ireland Consumer Council.

Mr Walker advised Members that Ms Edel Mullan was standing in for Mrs Lisa Toland who has recently been appointed to a new post in Belfast City Council. Mr Walker thanked Mrs Toland for her contribution to the Forum and wished her all the best in her new role.

Mr Walker introduced the newly appointed Deputy Chair, Mrs Carol Edwards, to the Forum. Mrs Edwards advised Members that she had previously worked for the Consumer Council as Head of Consumer Education & Skills and had been Chair of the Northern Ireland Financial Capability Partnership.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 25 JUNE 2014

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

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. DRAFT GUIDELINES FOR AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Mr Martin Gillespie advised Members that as part of the revised Aviation Policy Framework published in 2013, the Government committed to reviewing and updating the 2003 Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees. The Department for Transport (DfT) issued draft guidelines for consultation in December 2013 and published a final version in April 2014. However, these guidelines are only applicable in England, Scotland and Wales and it is the responsibility of the Department for Regional Development (DRD) to develop guidelines for consultative committees in Northern Ireland. The DRD have since taken the DfT guidelines and have revised them to make them applicable in a Northern Ireland context which was what had been done with the 2003 guidelines previously. A draft version of the NI guidelines is now available for consultation.

The notable differences between the previous (2006) NI guidelines and the proposed updated guidelines are the addition of a set of principles under which ACCs should operate and the inclusion of a 'Code of Conduct' for committee members.

Mr Gillespie advised Members that DRD would welcome the views and comments from Members of the Forum and is happy to take any queries or offer further guidance following the meeting.

The deadline for responses to the consultation is Monday 5th January 2015.

Mr Walker welcomed the efforts made by DRD to issue the draft guidelines in advance of Forum meeting to allow Members the opportunity to discuss at the meeting. He said that having reviewed the guidelines, he is pleased that in his view the Forum currently meets most of the updated guidelines.

Mr Walker requested feedback from Members on the updated guidelines. The following comments and queries were put forward by Members:

- In relation to the Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1994 section 2(d), Cllr Montgomery queried if there is a limit to the number of "other organisations" that can have ACC membership. Mr Walker responded that section 2 of the guidelines specifically addresses the size of committees and the mix of representation. It acknowledges the need for a balance to be struck between the size of committees to enable an adequate mix of interests to be represented whilst ensuring committees remain manageable and effective. He said that this aspect had been addressed by the Forum previously through the Forum Constitution which sets out the membership structure.
- Regarding the 'representative' principle, Mr Currie commented that in his view, the Forum seeks to ensure this remains an ongoing consideration. For example, there was a discussion at the last meeting regarding whether individuals with disabilities are adequately represented on the Forum. On this point, Mr Walker reminded Members that it was agreed at the previous meeting that the Forum's membership would be reviewed once the NI guidelines had been issued. Mr Walker proposed for this to be done once the NI guidelines had been finalised. Members agreed with this suggestion.
- In relation to paragraph 2.9 'ensuring organisations are representative', Mr Walker advised Members that in the current Forum constitution there are specific requirements that community groups must meet in order to be eligible for membership, including having a constitution in place and providing the number of registered members.
- Mr Hoey queried if the Forum's membership structure sufficiently represents local business interests at present. Mr Walker responded that the Forum currently has representatives from both Belfast City Centre Management and Belfast Chamber of Trade & Commerce (BCTC). Mr Moore added that BCTC represents a large number of businesses in Belfast and he can also provide the perspective of a business owner and a resident living in the vicinity of the Airport.
- In relation to paragraph 2.11 'specialist expertise', Mr Walker said that he would like to ask the question of DRD, what is meant by 'larger airports' in terms of the suggestion to permit technical advisers to support members of larger airports' committees and if this would apply to any of the NI airports.
- Regarding the 'transparent' principle, Mr Walker said that while the Forum currently has a dedicated webpage on the GBBCA website, it might be possible to look into other forms of

engagement such as the use of social media. However, consideration needs to be given to whether the administrative support available is sufficient to facilitate this.

Mr Currie suggested that it might be useful to produce a one page summary of the discussions and outcomes from each meeting to assist with the dissemination of information. Mr Currie also said that it is important that the language used in the meeting papers is not too technical which could hinder communication with a wider audience.

- In relation to paragraph 2.17 about opening meetings to the public, Mr Walker expressed his concern regarding the practicality and logistics of facilitating public attendance but asked for the views of other Members on this point. Mr McGlade responded that given the Forum meetings are always held at the Airport, there could be the perception that the Forum is not sufficiently independent of the Airport. Cllr Montgomery responded that in his view, the public are given the opportunity to raise issues through the various Member organisations represented on the Forum.

Mrs Allen suggested that it would be useful to know if any other committees in the UK currently allow the public to attend.

On the matter of public attendance, Mr Gillespie responded that the guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive but sufficiently flexible to allow the local circumstances to be taken into account.

Mr Kennerley proposed that it would be useful for DRD to clarify if the guidelines are suggesting that the public should be allowed to attend meetings or whether the public should be able to make representations.

Mr Ambrose concluded on this point by saying that he would be concerned if the Forum became a channel for members of the public to vent concerns about the Airport as this could detract from the constructiveness and effectiveness of the Forum.

- Mr Hoey expressed his concern that Northern Ireland might be deviating from the rest of the UK in terms of the ACC guidelines and queried if the DfT guidelines could be made available. Mr Walker responded that the DfT guidelines had been issued to Members when they had been published but that they could be circulated again. Mr Walker added that it might be useful for Members to see the comments put forward by Airport Consultative Committees in other regions in the UK as part of the consultation on the DfT guidelines. He suggested that the consultation response from the Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees (UKACCs) also to be circulated to Members following the meeting.

Action: Forum Secretary

- In relation to paragraph 3.2 'chairs', Mr Walker advised Members that he supported the suggestion of time limiting the terms of chairs. Mrs Edwards agreed with the Chair on this point.
- Regarding paragraph 3.4 'secretariat', Mr Walker said that in his view, it is reasonable for the Airport to provide the secretariat function as it could be difficult to secure funding from another organisation for this function.
- In relation to paragraph 3.18 'voting', Mr Walker expressed his concern that the Forum was not a decision making body and it is usually difficult to secure a consensus on any matter under discussion. Furthermore, he said that if he, as Chair, needed to take a position on a matter being put to a vote then this could compromise the independence of the role. Mr Ambrose echoed Mr Walker's concerns on the basis that the Forum is a consultative committee and not an executive committee with decision making powers. Mr Gillespie pointed out, however, that the guidelines stated that the Chair should avoid taking votes on matters other than those relating to the membership of the Committee and its sub-groups. Mr Kennerley suggested that for clarity it might be beneficial to remove this section from the guidelines altogether. However, Cllr Montgomery stated that he was not entirely in agreement with this suggestion as, on occasion, the Forum does put matters to a vote.

At this point Mr Gillespie was required to leave the meeting to attend another engagement.

The matter of the Forum's response to the consultation was discussed by Members and it was agreed that the Chair would respond to the consultation to advise that the guidelines had been discussed at the Forum meeting and to put forward some of the views expressed. However, given that there can be no consensus and the fact that individual organisations may wish to respond directly to the consultation, the intention is to make reference to individual consultation responses which will be appended to the Forum's response.

Due to Christmas leave arrangements, the Chair requested that Members submit their organisations' responses to him (or via the Forum Secretary) by Friday 19th December.

Action: All Members

A number of Members expressed concern about the duration and timing of the consultation, given that it is falling over the Christmas holiday period. Members also queried the scope of the consultation and whether it had been distributed more widely than to Forum Members. Mr Walker agreed to raise these points with Mr Gillespie following the meeting.

Action: Mr Walker

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Ambrose delivered an update to Members on the following:

5.1 Business Performance

The business continues to perform well this year. Despite losing the London Gatwick service operated by Flybe in March, passenger numbers are still expected to be above 2013 figures and GBBCA is forecasting double digit growth next year.

While the number of flights has decreased slightly on 2013, load factors have increased significantly to an average of 77% this year.

Flybe have now commenced its 3/day service between GBBCA and London City Airport (LCY). The route is proving very popular to date with load factors of around 75% on average. This is not surprising given the number of businesses in Northern Ireland with offices based in close proximity to LCY.

5.2 Route Development

GBBCA is pleased to announce a number of new routes to commence in 2015. Flybe will be providing a 3/day service to Liverpool from February and Vueling will be providing a 2/week service to Barcelona from May. While Vueling is a new airline to Northern Ireland, it is a major European operator and GBBCA hopes that this will present further opportunities for additional routes into Europe.

5.3 Capital Expenditure

Approximately £900k has been spent in 2014 on a number of capital projects including the installation of anti-backtrack doors from the Arrivals Hall and the upgrade of the terminal lighting with LED technology. Further capital projects to commence shortly include an upgrade to the car park facilities by extending the covered walkway to the Fast Track car park, the installation of full body scanners as required by DfT for security reasons and the tender for new fire appliances.

5.4 Planning

Regarding the Planning Agreement Modification Process, a Pre Inquiry Meeting took place on 19th November 2014 and the date for the Planning Inquiry has now been set for May 2015.

5.5 Corporate Responsibility

Through its Community Fund, GBBCA recently supported a number of Autism support organisations to develop a series of films aimed at demystifying the experience of air travel for

children living with Autism. The 'Autism in the Air' films, which are available on the Airport's website, were shot from the perspective of a child living with Autism and illustrate the various processes involved, from travelling to the airport, visiting check-in, processing through security, to boarding and finally disembarking the aircraft.

As part of its wider CR programme, GBBCA continues to engage with a number of primary schools in the local community and seeks to support their specific needs, where possible.

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

Mr Walker congratulated the Airport's Director of HR and Corporate Responsibility, Michelle Hatfield, on her recent achievement in securing the Institute of Directors (IoD) UK award for 'Leadership in Corporate Responsibility Director of the Year'.

Mr Wright commended the Airport on the increase in communication on its CR activity.

Mr Currie thanked the Airport for its Community Fund support for the East Belfast Suicide Awareness Programme. In relation to the associated PR arranged by the Airport, however, Mr Currie wished to establish if the Airport had agreed to have an MLA present at the photo call even though the MLA in question wasn't associated with the project. Mr Currie advised that the MLA did not attend in the end but it could have been an issue for the organisation given its political impartiality. Mr Ambrose responded that usually a political representative is involved in the PR if they are connected with the project being supported through the Community Fund. As this was not the case in this instance, he will investigate as to why this happened.

Action: Mr Ambrose

Mr Hoey queried if there is a plan to introduce new trolleys at the Airport in the near future. Mr Ambrose responded that this is planned for 2015.

Cllr Montgomery commented that the airside walkway was quite dark and queried if the Airport would consider upgrading it. Mr Ambrose responded that the walkway was initially designed primarily as shelter for arriving passengers travelling from the aircraft to the arrivals hall. However, it has since become an area that passengers dwell before boarding their flights for this reason upgrades have been made to add heating and to reinforce the roof to prevent leaks and so forth. However, it is unlikely that the airside walkway can be replaced altogether as the cost of doing so would be prohibitive.

Post meeting note: *the Airport will shortly be upgrading the lighting in the airside walkway with LED technology which should improve the lighting lux levels in the area.*

Cllr Montgomery shared with Members a recent negative experience transferring through Terminal 5 at Heathrow Airport for a connecting British Airways flight. He advised that he was

subject to numerous delays owing to the various security checks in place and nearly missed his connecting flight as a result.

Mr Ambrose responded that Heathrow Airport like all other UK Airports is required to implement the security measures introduced by the Department for Transport. For this reason, it is unlikely that Heathrow would be able to address this issue and it is more a matter for Government.

Mr Kennerley was asked if the Consumer Council had received any negative feedback from passengers who had missed their connecting flights due to delays for security checks. Mr Kennerley responded that he was not aware of this issue being raised with the NI Consumer Council to date.

6. 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 accepted questions from Forum Members regarding the Airport Statistics.

A discussion took place on Report 6-Noise Concerns 2013-14 by Type and Area. Given that the majority of concerns have come from the Ormeau / Annadale area in the year to date, Mr McGlade was asked for his feedback by the Forum Chair. Mr McGlade responded that one particular issue for residents is that flights seem to arrive over this area on calm days and at lower altitudes. Mr Ambrose responded that aircraft will not be lower than usual as aircraft on approach connect to the Instrument Landing System (ILS) and descend to the runway threshold at an angle of three degrees. Miss Duggan advised that there tends to be more frequent occurrences of prevailing north-easterly to easterly winds (which means aircraft will be arriving over the city) during the late spring and early summer months. Unfortunately this is when people may have their windows open or be outdoors and aircraft noise may appear more noticeable as a result.

It was noted that 9 individuals accounted for the 35 concerns which have been received from the Ormeau / Annadale area in the year to date. Mrs Allen responded that despite this fact, the concerns are still valid and individuals should continue to raise concerns if they feel justified in doing so. Mr McGlade added that the view held by many residents is that there is no point complaining to the Airport. Mr Ambrose responded that this depends on what the expectation of

individual complaining is as regards the outcome of the complaint and whether the issue is one that can be addressed – e.g. a flight off track.

Mr Walker queried if anything could be done to address the number of delays post 21:30 hours on the Manchester route. Mr Ambrose responded that this is one of the busiest routes in terms of number of turnarounds and so a larger number of delays would be expected as compared to other routes. However, he will look into it further and report back at the next meeting.

Action: Mr Ambrose

Mr Hoey queried if the airlines are still paying fines for flights after 21:30 hours. Mr Ambrose responded that depending on the contract arrangement with the airline, fines for Community Fund purposes may be paid by the airline or the Airport. However, the Airport imposes additional charges on the airlines for keeping the Airport open outside scheduled operating hours.

7. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Report from the Environmental Sub Group on 20th October 2014 which had been circulated in advance of the meeting was noted by Members.

Mrs Allen drew Members attention to the following points of note:

- The Airport is in the process of replacing the lighting in the ground floor areas of the terminal with LED technology which is expected to deliver an energy saving of around 130,000 kWh per year.
- The Airport has now received a project proposal to design and deliver the Standard Instrument Departure procedure for Runway 04. Unfortunately, the proposed cost to carry out the project has far exceeded the Airport's budget expectations. However, the DRD has suggested that there could be EU funding available for this type of project and the Airport is looking into this.

Mr Hoey commended the Airport on its environmental initiatives and suggested that the Airport publicise this information in the terminal building. Miss Duggan advised that there is a new information board just inside the terminal entrance with details on recent CR activity including environmental initiatives.

8. AOB

- 8.1** Mr Kennerley gave an update on recent developments in relation to passenger rights and the work of the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland – as follows:

- Under EU regulations, passengers are entitled to compensation if their flight is cancelled or delayed by more than three hours on arrival providing the disruption was not caused by "extraordinary circumstances". The Jet2 v Huzar case related to where technical faults that cause long delays to flights should be considered "extraordinary circumstances". The Court of Appeal ruled in this case that ordinary technical problems that cause flight disruption, such as component failure and general wear and tear, should not be considered "extraordinary circumstances" and therefore a valid defence for an airline not to pay compensation for long delays and cancelled flights under the relevant regulations. The case was then taken by Jet2 to the Supreme Court but the appeal has since been turned down.
- Similarly, the Supreme Court has decided not to allow an appeal from Thompson Airlines on an earlier ruling by the Court of Appeal confirming that the time limit for bringing a compensation claim under European law is six years in England and Wales and not two years as had been argued by the airline.
- The Airports Commission has recently launched a consultation on its assessment of proposals for additional runway capacity to date. The Consumer Council will be looking to see whether the matter of NI connectivity has been adequately addressed.
- The Consumer Council is carrying out a survey to find out how aware all Northern Ireland consumers are of the rights of passengers with a disability or reduced mobility when travelling by air. The survey can be completed online or can be issued by post.

Mr Kennerley asked if the survey could be circulated to Members following the meeting.

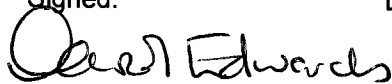
Action: Forum Secretary

8.2 Mr McGlade passed on thanks on the behalf of Dr McNamee to Miss Duggan for the information sent earlier that day in response to queries regarding the Airport's website and its noise abatement procedures.

9. DATE FOR 2015 MEETINGS

- I. 18th March
- II. 24th June
- III. 25th November

Signed:



Alan Walker (Forum Chair)

Date:

18 March 2015

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