

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 67

Held on Wednesday, 20th June 2012 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Attendees:

Mr Alan Walker	Deputy Chairman
Dr Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association
Dr Colm McNamee	Park Road and District Residents' Association
Cllr Tom Haire	Belfast City Council
Mrs Julie Allen	Belfast City Council
Mrs Lisa Toland	Belfast City Council
Cllr John Montgomery	North Down Borough Council
Cllr James McKerrow	North Down Borough Council
Capt. Ian Ewer	Base Captain Bmi
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr Scott Kennerley	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
Mr Andrew Irvine	Belfast City Centre Management
Mr Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
Mr Christopher McFerran	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association

Observers:

Mr David McCullough	Department for Regional Development
Mr Andrew Grieve	Department for Regional Development

In attendance:

Mr Mark Beattie	George Best Belfast City Airport
Miss Laura Duggan	Forum Secretary

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Mr Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport
Mr John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Mrs Laura McCorry	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Cllr Adam Newton	Belfast City Council

Mr Beattie, Operations Director at GBBCA advised Members, that due to unforeseen circumstances, Mr Ambrose was unable to attend the meeting and that he would be delivering the Chief Executive's report on Mr Ambrose's behalf.

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The Deputy Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting including Councillor James McKerrow from North Down Borough Council who has recently been appointed to the Forum and Mr Andrew Grieve who will be taking over from Mr McCullough as the representative from the Department of Regional Development for future meetings.

The Deputy Chairman paid tribute to the late Mr Alan Crowe, Forum Chairman, who passed away on Sunday 17th June after a short battle with illness. The Deputy Chairman advised Members of the service arrangements for Mr Crowe. All Members joined together in one minute silence in memory of Mr Crowe.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 14TH MARCH 2012

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

3. MATTERS ARISING

Miss Duggan advised Members that actions from the previous meeting had been closed out. One exception to this was the action to provide written commentary on the Airport Statistics at the time of circulating, which will be done in advance of the next meeting.

Action: Mr Ambrose

Mr Kennerley queried if there was any update since the last meeting regarding the development of a bus service between North Down and GBBCA. Miss Duggan advised that there was no further update.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Beattie expressed sympathies for the passing of Mr Crowe and offered his condolences on behalf of the Airport to Mr Crowe's family.

Mr Beattie delivered an update to Members on the following:

4.1 BMI / BMI Baby:

- BMI Baby ceased operations at GBBCA from 11th June. This was disappointing news for the Airport and its staff. The timing of the withdrawal was surprising, given that the new routes were performing better than expected in terms forward bookings.
- The BMI service between GBBCA and Heathrow is to be taken over and operated by British Airways. It is expected that a normal service will operate at least until the end of the summer schedule. The Airport is working closely with the BA service team in order to ensure a seamless transition between the two airlines and continuity of service. The

Airport would like to thank elected representatives for their support in protecting the Heathrow service.

4.2 Route Development:

Following the BMI Baby announcement, the Airport has been in negotiations with a number of airlines regarding route opportunities. Despite media speculation regarding Aer Lingus, however, no agreements have yet been finalised. GBBCA is hoping to be in a position to make some positive announcements by the end of the month.

4.3 Debate on Belfast Airports:

Mr Beattie advised members that the recent debate in the media regarding the potential benefits of merging the two Belfast airports, GBBCA and BIA, was purely an academic one. GBBCA is not for sale. Furthermore, the fact that between 1997 and 2007, the size of the Northern Ireland aviation market doubled in terms of passenger numbers, and this growth had been shared by both airports, demonstrates the benefit of having competition between the two airports.

4.4 Planning:

The Minister for the Environment has made an announcement that a decision on the Airport's request to vary the terms of its Planning Agreement will be made by the end of this year. As such, it is expected that a Public Inquiry will be held in the autumn in order to facilitate these timescales.

4.5 Olympic Flame:

On Saturday 2nd June, the Olympic flame was flown into GBBCA on a special British Airways aircraft sporting Olympic livery. A small reception was hosted at the Airport in conjunction with the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and was attended by past and present Olympians, amongst others. Pupils from the Airport's adopted schools – Victoria Park Primary, St Joseph's Primary and Mitchell House – formed a guard of honour to welcome the flame.

4.6 NI 2012:

Results are positive for Q1 and Q2 of the NI 2012 tourism campaign. Titanic Belfast has had 200,000 visitors in first two months of opening. The 2012 Irish Open which is due to take place at the end of the month is a sell-out which is further good news for the region.

4.7 Capital Projects:

To be covered under agenda item 7.

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

Mr Walker queried what impact the changeover from BMI to BA would have on existing Diamond Club members in terms of honouring reduced car parking charges in the short stay car park at GBBCA, etc., and how these changes will be communicated to customers. Mr Beattie responded that this level of detail has yet to be ironed out.

Dr McCaughan brought Members' attention to a comment made by Mr Beattie during a presentation to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee on 24th May, that residents groups on the Forum are broadly supportive of the Airport's request to vary its Planning Agreement. Dr McCaughan stated that this is not the case and that the residents groups in question had been misrepresented on this basis. Mr Beattie responded that he had not intended to misrepresent residents groups on the Forum. The consultation responses from residents groups had not been seen at the time of the Committee meeting. Moreover, the views of residents' groups have since been submitted as part of the overall Forum response to the consultation and this will be the official record of views that will be considered by Planning Service. Dr McCaughan said that while this might be the case, it would be desirable for a correction to be made to the record of the Committee meeting clarifying this matter. Mr Walker proposed to Members that he would take this matter up with the Airport directly following the meeting. Members agreed that they were happy with this approach.

Action: Mr Walker

Councillor Montgomery queried if the number of members of residents groups on the Forum have been considered. Miss Duggan advised that member numbers were considered at the time of application to the Forum but not subsequent to this.

5. AIRPORT STATISTICS

Mr Beattie gave an update on the Forum Reports:

- 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 complaints 2011-12

Members queried the number of extensions to accommodate Birmingham services over the last three months. Mr Beattie responded that he would investigate and report back at the next meeting.

Action: Mr Beattie

Mr Beattie highlighted to Members that there had been a greater than usual number of arrivals over the city in April and May due to a prolonged period of northerly and north-easterly winds.

Mr Kennerley queried what the Airport's process is for handling complaints. Miss Duggan advised Members that complaints may be received in a number of ways including: by telephone to the airport switchboard; through the Noise Complaint Hotline; by letter or comment card; by email; or through the Airport's website. All complaints are logged on a database and then forwarded within the Airport to the person most appropriate to deal with the issues raised and to

respond to the complainant. All individuals who supply adequate contact details will receive a response.

A discussion took place on whether the statistics on noise complaints held by GBBCA reflected the complaints received by other authorities such as Belfast City Council or North Down Borough Council. Mrs Allen responded to say that on the basis that Belfast City Council has no legal power to deal with complaints regarding aircraft noise, the Council would either refer the complainant to the Airport directly, or else refer the complaint to the Airport on the complainant's behalf.

Post Meeting Note: *Councillor Montgomery has advised that North Down Borough Council do not record complaints about aircraft noise but refer the complainant directly to the appropriate authority.*

Dr McCaughan made the point that the number of complaints received by GBBCA did not fully reflect the noise issue because not everyone that is affected by aircraft noise will make a complaint.

Dr McCaughan queried if delays during the day would be similar to those after 21:30 hours as a percentage of total flights. Mr Beattie responded to say that the number of flights after 21:30 hours as a percentage of total flights would tend to be less because of efforts to manage the number of these delays such as through imposing charges on the airlines for 'extensions' to operating hours.

Dr McCaughan queried if it would be possible for the number of flights after 21:30 hours to be reduced. Mr Beattie responded that while the Airport will continue to actively manage the number of flights after 21:30 hours, it is unlikely that the number will ever reach zero because of circumstances outside the Airport's control, for example, extreme and adverse weather, and the need to take a balanced approach in such circumstances.

6. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Report from the Environmental Sub Group on 21st May 2012 that had been circulated in advance of the meeting was noted by Members. The Deputy Chairman welcomed questions by Members on the Report.

Mr Irvine queried if the introduction of standard instrument procedures at GBBCA would affect aircraft that currently operate visually. Captain Ewer responded to say that these procedures would only apply for commercial aircraft capable of making an instrument departures / approaches.

7. AIRPORT OPERATIONS / SAFETY PRESENTATION

Mr Beattie delivered a presentation to Members on the following:

- Aerodrome regulatory regime
- Aerodrome Safeguarding
- Bird and tree management
- Capital Investment:
 - Terminal reconfiguration
 - Noise & Track Monitoring System and radar replacement
 - Baggage handling system
 - Car Hire facilities
 - Instrument Landing System
 - Arrivals Hall (to be completed Autumn 2012)

Dr McCaughan highlighted a number of issues with the new configuration of the front-of-house including the queuing arrangements for taxi hire and the absence of a shelter over the crossing between the main entrance to the terminal and the taxi rank. He queried if the Airport would consider putting a covered walkway in place to protect passengers during bad weather. Mr Beattie acknowledged that there was an issue of passengers tending to queue in the wrong direction for taxis and not under the shelter and the Airport was seeking to resolve this. In relation to the provision of a covered walkway, Mr Beattie responded that while this would be ideal, it is unlikely to be provided at the present time due to capital constraints.

Councillor Montgomery commented that there were concerns expressed in the media recently over the manner in which car hire companies are charging customers for fuel and queried if GBBCA monitor car hire companies on such matters. Mr Beattie responded to say that while some aspects of the of car hire operations on site are monitored (such as desk manning, customer service, and so forth) commercial aspects of the contracts between car hire companies and their customers are not. Mr Beattie said that the Airport would welcome feedback, however, on such matters in relation to operations at GBBCA.

Dr McCaughan queried what the Airport's policy is with respect to whistleblowing on safety matters. Mr Beattie advised that the Civil Aviation Authority has in place a system known as Mandatory Occurrence Reporting where concerns about safety can be lodged for further investigation. Mandatory Occurrence Reports are treated confidentially to protect the identity of the individual. In the interests of promoting an open and 'blame-free' culture on safety, the Airport also has in place an internal reporting system which includes a safety comment box and an email account both of which are designed to preserve anonymity. The Airport is keen to learn from best practice with respect to promoting safety and for this reason a representative from GBBCA sits on a safety forum with other EU Airports including Zurich and Copenhagen.

8. UKACCS ANNUAL LIAISON MEETING 2012

Mr Walker gave Forum Members a summary of discussions at the UKACCS Annual Liaison Meeting which took place on 22nd May at Birmingham Airport:

- **UKACCS membership fees:** there will be a flat rate increase of £125 across member ACCs. Mr Walker on behalf of the Belfast City Airport Forum did challenge this flat rate increase on the basis that it represented a greater percentage increase in contribution compared to other larger member ACCs but this wasn't accepted.
- **Air Passenger Duty:** in view of the differences of opinion amongst some ACCs on the question of a regional variation in the level of APD, it was agreed that UKACCS would in future maintain a neutral position on any proposals for regional variations to APD.
- **DfT Aviation Policy Framework consultation:** this was expected to be available in March but has been delayed and is likely not to be published until summer 2012. Alongside this consultation, the Government also intends to publish a call for evidence on maintaining effective UK hub airport connectivity.
- **Role of Airport Consultative Committees:** this is to be looked at in the Aviation Policy Framework and the Government intends to undertake a public consultation on a draft new version of the guidance for ACCs once the aviation policy is in place.
- **CAA Consumer Panel:** Mr Keith Richards has been appointed as the first Chair of the Consumer Panel. He will be working with the CAA in shaping the Panel's role and composition, with the aim of having it up and running this summer. The UKACCS' Working Group was asked to look at the establishment of formal mechanisms to engage with the work of the Panel as its relationship could help inform the review of the DfT's guidelines for ACCs. It was felt that the Panel would benefit from using UKACCS as a key reference group for evidence.
- **Civil Aviation Bill:** the Government is currently seeking parliamentary approval for this.
- **European Update:** the DfT provided an update on its work in Europe on the three legislative changes to the package – slots, ground handling and noise. In relation to the preservation of domestic slots at London airports, the DfT was asked how it was taking forward this issue in Europe and whether an alternative mechanism to the PSO legislation was being advocated at European level. The DfT would report back to UKACCS.

Post meeting note: for more information including agenda, papers and minutes from this meeting please visit the UKACCS website: <http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting12.html>

9. FORUM MEMBERSHIP

Miss Duggan advised Members that a recruitment process had taken place following the last meeting to fill the vacant seat for an East Belfast community group. A list of community groups was provided by Councillor Newton for this purpose. Application forms were sent to these groups. Information was also provided on the Airport's website and a press release was issued as well as notification via the Airport's social media platforms. Despite this, only one application was received which was from East Belfast Community Development Agency.

Mr Walker advised Members that a small panel had been convened and will be reviewing the application from EBCDA to ensure it meets the criteria for membership. A decision will be made in advance of the next Forum meeting.

10. AOB

Mr McCullough sought to clarify that while the Department for Regional Development did not provide comments to the Forum on the consultation on the Airport's request to vary its Planning Agreement (on the basis of its Observer role) it would be making a response directly to Planning Service to fulfil its statutory duties.

Mr Kennerley advised Members that the Consumer Council had made a representation to the NI Affairs Select Committee inquiry into a NI Aviation Strategy. The Consumer Council also responded directly to Planning Service on the recent consultation regarding the Airport's request to vary its Planning Agreement.

Mr Kennerley drew Members attention to EU Air Passenger Rights Day which will be taking place on 4th July. The Consumer Council will have a presence at both Belfast airports on the day. The Consumer Council will also be conducting an online questionnaire in conjunction with the European Consumer Centre Ireland and the Commission for Aviation Regulation to examine consumers' awareness of the rights of passengers with a disability or reduced mobility when travelling by air. This questionnaire can be accessed on the Consumer Council website: www.consumercouncil.org.uk

Dr McCaughan queried if the Consumer Council would be considering potential action relating to competition if Aer Lingus were to move to GBBCA. Mr Kennerley responded to say that any issues relating to competition would be for the Competition Commission.

11. DATE FOR 2012 MEETINGS

Proposed dates:

- Wednesday 14th November

Signed:



Date:

14/11/12.

Alan Walker (Deputy Chairman)
AW/ld