

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM
Minutes of Meeting No. 89
Held on Wednesday 4 September 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
Alderman Tom Haire	Belfast City Council
Mr Terry Hoey	Palmerston Residents' Association
Cllr John Kyle	Belfast City Council
Mr Hugh Larmour	Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Mr Raymond McNair	George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA)
Mr Richard Williams	Consumer Council Northern Ireland

In attendance:

Mrs Michelle Hatfield	George Best Belfast City Airport
Ian Nuttall	Forum Secretary

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 Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners

Mr Walker welcomed Cllr Kyle and Mr Larmour to the Forum as new members and Alderman Haire as a returning member. He also welcomed Ian Nuttall to his first meeting as Forum Secretary.

2. EXTENSION OF CHAIR'S POSITION

Mr Walker temporarily left the room whilst Mrs Edwards sought approval for a year's extension to Mr Walker's tenure as Forum Chair. This was agreed by Members.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 20 MARCH 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

The business has performed well this year to date with passenger numbers in 2019 expected to be similar to last year. In July, both the commencement of the new route to Carlisle and the Open Championship golf in Portrush contributed to a successful summer period.

Following 12 months' service of the Airport's upgraded passenger security arrangements, the average queue time is around six minutes, with high levels of satisfaction reflected in recent passenger surveys.

Recent awards received include the Irish News *Right Place to Work Award* and the *Aviation Industry Awards Airport Achievement Award*. The Airport is currently in the final top three for *Airport of the Year* in the AIR Convention Awards, alongside Heathrow Airport and Greater Toronto Airports Authority. Mr Hoey commended the Airport on entering for awards. Link to the AIR awards and voting page to be provided to Members.

Action: Forum Secretary

4.2 Capital Expenditure

GBBCA has begun the first phase of developing front of house areas including additional bus spaces with an associated passenger shelter, six additional taxi spaces and five additional account taxi spaces – all with passenger shelters. By end of year, approval shall be sought for capital expenditure to further develop car parking and road infrastructure. Should approval be obtained, a further presentation shall be provided at a later Forum meeting. Responding to a question from Mr Hoey, Mr McNair confirmed there will be no change to the proximity of taxis to the terminal building as a result of the development.

Two new fire tenders have recently been purchased, demonstrating continuing shareholder commitment to a wider programme of investment.

4.3 Flight Extensions

Whilst it is expected that August's figures will show an improvement in performance, Mr McNair expressed the Airport's disappointment over recent high levels of delay incurred by Flybe. He explained that Brian Ambrose and the Airport's Executive Team have recently been in discussions with the new Chief Executive of Connect Airways (the recent buyers of Flybe) and assured the Forum that the issue remains on the agenda at the highest level. It is understood that Connect is committed to restoring levels of performance in advance of any re-branding and proposes to showcase operations at GBBCA as a best in airport class exemplar.

5. AIRPORT STATISTICS

The Airport Statistics reports for the period March to July 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 (NB this was erroneously numbered 9 in the circulated papers): Customer Insights Survey (CIS) Summary Results Q1 2019; and Appendix 1: GBBCA Corporate Responsibility Report.

Mr Walker invited questions on these reports.

Mr Andrews and Alderman Haire referred to issues with cabin luggage size checks conducted by Flybe, based on recent experience, including metal versus cardboard sizers, inconsistencies in the application of luggage size restrictions, and the location of luggage size checks. Mr McNair explained that GBBCA has sought to ensure Flybe size checks are carried out before security and ideally at check-in, whilst Mr Williams indicated that the Consumer Council has communicated with Flybe on the problem of inconsistency.

Regarding Report 7, Mr Hoey expressed surprise at the low numbers of noise complaints from the Connswater area and concern about the number of complaints raised by a single resident in the Newtownards Road area. Councillor Kyle commended the Airport, stating that the situation has improved in recent years and that in the past year he has not received any complaints from constituents.

Regarding Report 8, Mr Walker referred to the results of the recent CAA UK Aviation Consumer Survey, pointing to factors in airports other than GBBCA which may have contributed to low satisfaction levels amongst Northern Ireland passengers. Link to survey report to be provided to Members.

Action: Forum Secretary

Mr Andrews asked if the Airport will be introducing 3D security scanners; Mr McNair stated that implementation will be required eventually, but that no material impact on service levels is expected.

Mr Andrews asked how parking charges compared with other airports. Referring to a recent *Which?* report, Mr McNair explained that overall GBBCA is similar to Belfast International Airport but is one of only a few airports still providing a 10 minute free drop off/pick up period. Mrs Allen stated that many airports charging for drop off/pick up have public transport options; Mr McNair referred to the current dedicated Bus Service to and from GBBCA to Belfast city centre and the aforementioned front of house development to accommodate this. Mr Walker raised the issue of potential unintended consequences from introducing a charge, including impacts on local traffic; Mr McNair stated that any future charge would not be introduced without due consideration of such consequences.

Mr Hoey expressed concern that the CIS data provided did not refer to passenger disability. Mr McNair referred to a recent Airport Operators Association award received by the PRM (passengers with reduced mobility) team, and Mr Williams highlighted that GBBCA performs strongly in CAA Accessibility Audits and referred to the Consumer Council's ongoing work with the Airport on PRM. Mr Walker reminded Members that the selection of data provided in the circulated reports was previously agreed with the Forum but suggested that there may be scope to highlight data related to PRM from the overall information captured through CIS.

Action: Forum Secretary

Regarding the GBBCA Corporate Responsibility Report, Mr Hoey queried how the airport decided the different amounts to award to successful Community Fund applications. Mrs Hatfield explained that awards reflected the amounts applied for by applicants for specific projects. She pointed out that the airport also provided long term support to a number of schools through the Airport's Adopted Schools Programme.

6. CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

Mrs Hatfield provided a presentation on recent corporate responsibility activities. This included discussion of a range of community-focused activities including the IGNITE Leadership Programme for young people, the High Flyers Apprenticeship Scheme, the Welcome Organisation charity partnership, and the high level of support provided through the Community Fund (expected to have provided a total of £500,000 by 2020). Presentation to be circulated to Members.

Action: Forum Secretary

Members were reminded that the last opportunity for groups to apply to the 2019 Community Fund finishes on 31 October, and that details are available on the GBBCA website.

It is hoped that the IGNITE model will be adopted by other businesses as part of their corporate responsibility work, and Members are asked to bear in mind any young people they feel would benefit from the programme, should it be repeated.

Action: All

Members commended Mrs Hatfield on the corporate responsibility work undertaken and Mr Walker expressed congratulations and thanks to those involved. He also thanked her for the support her team provides to the Forum, including Paula Bittles, Corporate Services Executive Assistant for her work in the interim period following Laura Duggan's departure.

7. COMMUNITY GROUP RECRUITMENT

Members gave approval (proposed by Alderman Haire; seconded by Mr Andrews) to begin the process to recruit additional community groups to the Forum (as proposed at the June 2019 Forum meeting – paper to be recirculated to Members) – to be completed ahead of the March 2020 Forum meeting.

Action: Forum Secretary, Mr Walker, Mrs Edwards

8. AOB

Mr Walker and Mrs Edwards attended the UKACC meeting in Inverness in June. Mr Walker stated that the Forum should be proud of the work it has done, comparing favourably with that undertaken by the wider group of Airport Consultative Committees. Meeting report to be circulated to Members.

Action: Forum Secretary

Mr Williams suggested that the Forum may wish to consider the Heathrow Airport Expansion Consultation which is open until 13 September.

Action: Mr Walker; Mrs Edwards

Members were reminded by Mr Walker that they are each asked to attend at least one meeting of the Environmental Sub-Group (ESG). Due to recent personnel changes and the meetings schedule there was no ESG meeting in advance of this Forum meeting. The next meeting will take place ahead of the November Forum meeting – date to be confirmed.

Action: Forum Secretary, Mrs Allen

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27 November 2019.

Signed:

Date:

Alan Walker (Forum Chair) AW/in