

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 70

Held on Wednesday, 26 June 2013 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Attendees:

Mr Alan Walker	Forum Chairman
Cllr Adam Newton	Belfast City Council
Cllr Tom Haire	Belfast City Council
Mrs Julie Allen	Belfast City Council
Mr Jonny Currie	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Mr Scott Kennerley	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
Mr Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
Dr Colm McNamee	Park Road and District Residents' Association
Dr Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association
Mr Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport

Observers:

Mr Sean Coulter	Department for Regional Development
Ms Lynn Gaw	Department for Regional Development

In attendance:

Miss Laura Duggan	Forum Secretary
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1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Cllr John Montgomery	North Down Borough Council
Cllr James McKerrow	North Down Borough Council
Dr Andrew Grieve	Department for Regional Development
Mrs Lisa Toland	Belfast City Council
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr Christopher McFerran	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Mr Stephen Finlay	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
Mr John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce

2. WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Mr Walker welcomed all present to the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2013

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record. All actions from previous meeting were closed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Mr Ambrose advised Members that due to roster arrangements, the base captain for Aer Lingus, Mr Harry Brady, was unable to attend today's meeting but expressed interest in attending future meetings.

4.2 Mr Wright expressed disappointment regarding the lack of coverage of Belfast and Northern Ireland in the most recent issue of Aer Lingus's inflight magazine ('Cara'). Mr Wright considers this a missed opportunity to promote the region as a tourist destination. Mr Ambrose responded that he would take the matter up with Aer Lingus and suggested for those Members connected with *Visit Belfast* and other tourist organisations to do the same.

Action: Mr Ambrose / All Members

5. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Ambrose delivered an update to Members on the following:

5.1 Business Performance

- Positive news on passenger front at GBBCA with 1.18 million passengers travelling through the Airport in the first 6 months of 2013. Double digit growth is expected for the second half of the year. The three main airlines at GBBCA are performing well.

5.2 Route Development

- Aer Lingus commenced its new European routes (to Faro, Malaga and Palma) at the end of March. These routes are performing very well with passenger loads of circa 88% on average. On this basis, GBBCA is keen to develop further into the European market next year.

5.3 Capital Expenditure

- The increase in passenger numbers ahead of budget has presented GBBCA with some car parking capacity challenges, in particular, in the short stay car park. As a result, airport staff have been moved to a temporary car park in order to free up additional spaces.

5.4 Corporate Responsibility

- GBBCA has recently received a number of accolades for its comprehensive CR programme including its work with local schools and its Community Fund – as follows:
 - Business in the Community NI Impact Awards 2013 '*Local Community Impact*';
 - Irish News Workplace & Employment Awards 2013 '*Right Place to Work*' (*Highly Commended*); and
 - Workforce Training Services '*Employer of the Year 2013*'.

5.5 G8 Summit 2013 – Co. Fermanagh, NI

GBBCA handled mainly advanced parties for the G8 Summit on 17th and 18th June via its London routes as well as some chartered flights for security personnel. Staff at GBBCA worked very hard in preparation for the event and operations went smoothly as a result. The logistical success of the G8 Summit in NI is yet another testament to the region in terms of its ability to cater for major public events. The visit of President Obama on Marine One and the First Lady on Air Force Two went very well.

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

Cllr. Haire queried if GBBCA is looking to develop a route into Brussels commenting on the significant demand for this service at Dublin Airport by officials travelling to / from EU institutions.

Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport is seeking to secure routes into major European cities. In particular, it is keen to develop access into Germany which is not currently served by a direct route from NI.

Mr Ambrose advised Members that DETI now has a dedicated resource to help promote and coordinate access for Northern Ireland. Direct access is seen as a key factor in boosting economic development in the region.

Dr McCaughan queried how many destinations are served by GBBCA.

Post meeting note: a full list of airlines and destinations served can be found on the GBBCA website: <http://belfastcityairport.com/Flight-Information/Destinations-and-Airlines.aspx>

GBBCA has the only connection from Northern Ireland into London Heathrow and into the One World alliance, enabling passengers to connect to hundreds of worldwide destinations with British Airways and their alliance partners.

6. AIRPORT STATISTICS

Mr Ambrose 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

Dr McCaughan queried if the rollout of the Embraer 175 aircraft by Flybe is likely to be delayed in light of its recent financial issues. Mr Ambrose responded that he is aware of a cost cutting

exercise being carried out by management at Flybe. It is possible that the E175 aircraft might be rolled out over a longer period as a result.

Mr Ambrose advised Members that while Flybe will be withdrawing its London Gatwick service from GBBCA in March 2014, it is increasing capacity on some of its other routes.

Members discussed the increase in the number of complaints received by GBBCA in April and May 2013, in particular, complaints regarding early / pre-07:00 flights. Mr Ambrose advised that these complaints coincided with the commencement of the summer schedule at GBBCA.

Mr Walker suggested that the Forum revisit the noise complaint statistics at the next meeting to assess whether a trend is emerging in this regard.

7. CONSULTATION ON GBBCA DRAFT NOISE ACTION PLAN 2013-18

Miss Duggan in her position as Environmental Executive for GBBCA delivered a presentation on the main elements of the draft Noise Action Plan 2013-18 for GBBCA.

Mr Currie commented that the presentation was useful to summarise the Action Plan and enhance understanding. He queried if a summary of the document could be available to better equip EBCDA in communicating it to its Members and local residents who may be affected by the aircraft noise from operations at GBBCA.

Miss Duggan advised that an executive summary is provided at the beginning of the Action Plan. Mr Ambrose suggested that a copy of today's presentation be made available to Members following the meeting.

Action: Forum Secretary

Dr McCaughan expressed concern regarding the timing and duration of the consultation on GBBCA's draft Noise Action Plan 2013-18. He queried why GBBCA had decided to issue the draft Action Plan for consultation over the July holiday period and for the minimum period set out in the guidance issued by the Department of the Environment. Dr McNamee echoed this concern.

Mr Ambrose advised Members that the action planning process was delayed as GBBCA was awaiting the final technical guidance for noise mapping and action planning to be issued by the Department of the Environment. GBBCA is working to tight timescales set out in the Environmental Noise Directive. The END process is also linked to the Planning Agreement Modification process and as such, extending the consultation period will have a knock on effect on the timing of the Public Inquiry to determine this.

Dr McCaughan responded that GBBCA had failed to agree a noise control contour following the revision of its Planning Agreement in 2008. As such, this process should not be allowed to affect the consultation period for its draft Noise Action Plan.

Mr Ambrose responded that the requirement in the 2008 Planning Agreement was for GBBCA to agree an indicative noise contour. An indicative control contour which cannot be enforced as it has no legal basis. GBBCA is seeking to agree a noise contour control cap instead (as requested by the DoE) as this will have a legal basis and it will give local residents an assurance of the future noise environment resulting from operations at GBBCA. Furthermore, the process to remove the Seats for Sale limit at GBBCA has been subject to a number of Judicial Reviews which have caused significant delays.

Mr Wright commented that the consultation period was sufficient for Holywood Residents' Association to discuss and submit a response to GBBCA on its draft Noise Action Plan.

Following the discussion on the appropriateness of the duration of the consultation period and whether it should be extended, Mr Ambrose suggested that he would raise the matter for consideration by the Board of Directors at GBBCA next week and respond to Members on its decision subsequent to this.

Action: Mr Ambrose

Post meeting note: as advised by email to Members on 1 July 2013, having listened to all the opinions expressed at the Forum including those who felt the consultation period was more than adequate and others who felt July was an undesirable time to be consulting, GBBCA have concluded that the 8-week period is appropriate and consistent with guidelines issued by the Department of the Environment.

Mrs Allen advised Members that Belfast City Council will be making a formal response to the consultation on GBBCA's draft Noise Action Plan.

Mrs Allen queried if as part of the validation process, GBBCA had measured the noise at individual dwellings within the 'Important Areas'. Miss Duggan responded that validation of noise levels was carried out during the noise modelling process using measured noise readings from the Airport's fixed noise monitors.

Dr McCaughan expressed concern that some aircraft departing over Belfast Lough are not adhering to the noise abatement procedures by cutting across North Down. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport's track keeping system can investigate this.

Action: Forum Secretary

Mr Walker concluded the discussion on GBBCA's draft Noise Action Plan suggesting that he could prepare a draft response to the consultation document on behalf of Members with a view

to reflecting the range of comments and concerns of the Forum. This response could be in addition to the individual responses by Forum Members to the consultation. Members agreed with this approach.

Action: Forum Chairman

8. UKACCS 2013 Meeting

Mr Walker gave Forum Members a summary of the proceedings at the UKACCs (Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees) Annual Meeting which took place on 5th and 6th June 2013 at Edinburgh Airport.

8.1 Presentation by Edinburgh Airport

Some interesting points to note from this presentation are as follows:

- 41% of passengers at Edinburgh Airport are inbound tourists
- Almost a third of all users travel to / from Edinburgh Airport via public transport

8.2 The Airports Commission

A presentation was given by the Head of the Airports Commission Secretariat. The Airports Commission has been tasked with the assessment of options for meeting the UK's international connectivity needs including actions to improve the use of existing runway capacity and recommendations for credible long-term capacity solutions. The matter of Air Passenger Duty (APD) will not be considered. Regional airport connectivity is on their agenda albeit for regional services only.

8.3 Aviation Policy Framework

DfT presented on key elements of the Government's Aviation Policy Framework (APF). The Government's aim for the APF was to help ensure that the benefits of future growth were shared with the industry working with local communities to tackle noise and other environmental issues. DfT are looking to Airport Consultative Committees (ACCs) to work with their airports to ensure that noise issues were reported in a meaningful way to the public.

8.4 DfT Review of Guidelines for ACCs

DfT presented its initial thoughts on the changes needed to the guidelines for ACCs and the timetable for consultation. The Government's aspiration contained in the APF is to strengthen the role of ACCs. The DfT is proposing to consult and issue updated guidance by the end of the year.

8.5 CAA's Information Powers

The CAA presented on its new information powers and the work undertaken by the CAA in the development of its Statement of Policy. The Civil Aviation Act 2012 enabled regulated information provision by the CAA. This includes information to assist consumers to compare air transport services and facilities and information relating to the environmental effects of civil

aviation in the UK. The CAA must also consult upon and publish a Statement of Policy for carrying out these functions. A consultation document has been published on the CAA website and the deadline for responses is 31st August 2013.

8.6 CAA Consumer Panel

The Chair of the CAA Consumer Panel provided an update on the work of the Panel over the past year. It was noted that the Panel had no executive powers but had more of an influencing role. The Panel's first annual report is currently in preparation.

8.7 Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM)

Pre-notification rates of PRM have improved but there is still much room for improvement. Only a limited percentage (around 40%) of passengers across Europe pre-notify their assistance needs before travelling. This is a central problem for airports and air carriers in trying to provide assistance.

A UK industry group comprising ABTA, CAA, DfT, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, airlines, airports, tour operators, travel agents, PRM service providers and an independent disability representative last year issued some new guidelines – *Pre-Notification Guidance - for Supporting Passengers with Reduced Mobility* – to help deliver a smooth airport experience for passengers who have a disability or have difficulty moving around at airports.

The Chairman accepted questions from Members on the UKACCs meeting proceedings.

Dr McCaughan expressed concern about the financial impact of APD on businesses in NI that have connections with the UK mainland and queried what further measures could be taken to address the issue.

Mr Walker responded that the general consensus is that APD has a negative impact on NI and this was communicated in the Forum's consultation response to the draft APF.

Mr Kennerley said that the Consumer Council shares this view and it will continue to champion the issue.

Post meeting note: *more information from the UKACCs annual meeting including agenda, papers, presentations and minutes can be found on the UKACCs website:*

<http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting13.html>

9. AOB

Mr Kennerley advised Members of a review currently underway at an EU level of passenger rights to compensation from airlines in instances of a flight being cancelled or a passenger being denied boarding. There is the potential for the liability of airlines to be considerably

limited as a result of this review. The Consumer Council is working to ensure the rights of passengers are sufficiently protected and will keep Members abreast of any developments.

10. DATE FOR 2013 MEETINGS

- Wednesday 20th November

Signed: 

Date: 21st November 2013

Alan Walker (Forum Chairman)
AW/ld