

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 73

Held on Wednesday, 25 June 2014 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Attendees:

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| Mr Alan Walker | Forum Chairman |
| Cllr John Montgomery | North Down Borough Council |
| Mrs Lisa Toland | Belfast City Council |
| Mrs Julie Allen | Belfast City Council |
| Cllr Tom Haire | Belfast City Council |
| Mr Mark Doherty | Belfast Harbour Commissioners |
| Mr Scott Kennerley | Northern Ireland Consumer Council |
| Dr Colm McNamee | Park Road and District Residents' Association |
| Mr Christopher McFerran | Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association |
| Dr Daniel V. McCaughan | Cultra Residents' Association |
| Mrs Isabelle Weir | Hollywood Residents' Association |
| Mr Brian Ambrose | George Best Belfast City Airport |

In attendance:

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| Miss Laura Duggan | Forum Secretary |
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1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Apologies were received from:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Cllr Adam Newton | Belfast City Council |
| Mr Martin Gillespie | Department for Regional Development |
| Mr Andrew Irvine | Belfast City Centre Management |
| Mr John Moore | Belfast Chamber of Commerce |
| Mr Gordon Wright | Hollywood Residents' Association |
| Capt. Harry Brady | Aer Lingus Base Captain |
| Mr Terry Hoey | Palmerstown Residents' Association |

Mr Walker welcomed all present to the meeting including Mrs Isabelle Weir from Hollywood Residents' Association, standing in for Mr Gordon Wright who was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr Walker advised Members that Cllr. Newton was recovering from a recent illness and could not attend the meeting for this reason.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 2 APRIL 2014

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

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Forum Deputy Chair

Mr Walker advised Members that the CV of the proposed candidate for the position of Deputy Chair, Mrs Carol Edwards, had been circulated to Members in advance of the meeting. In line with the Forum Constitution, a secret ballot would take place and the Forum Secretary provided voting slips to Members for this purpose. Mr Walker advised Members that the slips would be collected later in the meeting and the results announced under agenda item 7.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Ambrose delivered an update to Members on the following:

4.1 Business Performance

- The business continues to perform well year to date with passenger numbers up 2-3% on the previous year. This is primarily due to increased load factors, which are now well above 70% on average, rather than an increase in the number of flights operating at GBBCA.
- Flybe has returned to profitability following its recent restructuring programme. The airline has switched from Embraer jets to a full Dash-8 Q400 turboprop fleet at GBBCA (six based aircraft) which have a lower noise impact.

4.2 Capital Expenditure

- On 22 May, the new 'Aspire Lounge', was unveiled at GBBCA in a ceremony attended by Dame Mary Peters. The lounge, which is operated by Swissport (formerly known as Servisair) further enhances the facilities at GBBCA. The lounge is open to both premium ticket holders (Priority Pass, Aer Lingus Gold Circle card holders, Flybe premium customers, etc.) as well as economy ticket holders on a pay-per-use basis.
- GBBCA has installed anti-backtrack doors (widely used in the industry) for passengers exiting from the Arrivals Hall. The doors are working well to date.
- GBBCA is investing in enhanced X-ray screening equipment for baggage which, when installed, should result in faster passenger processing by security.

4.3 London Heathrow Airport

- British Airways will be moving their flights to/from GBBCA from Terminal 2 to Terminal 5 at London Heathrow Airport (LHR), from the end of October this year. This should prove beneficial for connecting passengers by reducing transfer times.
- LHR unveiled its new Terminal 2 earlier this month at an opening ceremony attended by Her Majesty the Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh. Aer Lingus will move its

operations to Terminal 2 (to be known as 'The Queen's Terminal), from Wednesday 9 July.

4.4 Route Development

- GBBCA is pleased to inform Members that Flybe is to commence a 3/day service between GBBCA and London City Airport (LCY) from October this year. This should be attractive to business travellers given LCY's close proximity to Canary Wharf, one of the main business districts in London.
- GBBCA continues to engage with airlines to develop additional routes for 2015.

4.5 Tourism

- The Giro d'Italia event which took place in Northern Ireland in May this year was highly successful and presented positive images of Northern Ireland worldwide. Future events confirmed for Northern Ireland include the Irish Open which will be hosted by Royal County Down Golf Club in 2015 and the British Open which will be hosted by Royal Portrush in 2019. In addition, the world's Tug of War Championships will take place in Belfast next year.

4.6 Other

- GBBCA hosted its annual business breakfast for political representatives earlier this month which was well attended.
- GBBCA received a royal visit from Her Majesty the Queen and HRH the Duke of Edinburgh on Monday this week.
- The 'High Fliers Apprenticeship Scheme' at GBBCA is progressing well. One of the apprentices, on completion of her Level 2 NVQ in Business Administration and 18 month placement at GBBCA, recently secured full-time employment in a medical practice.

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

Cllr Montgomery queried if the recent decision by Flybe to switch back to turboprop aircraft at GBBCA would have a negative impact on the Airport. Cllr Montgomery said he understood the reason that Flybe previously decided to switch from turboprop to jet aircraft was due to reliability issues with the turboprop aircraft. Mr Ambrose responded that Flybe had been one of the earliest customers of the Dash-8 Q400 turboprop aircraft and there were inevitably some teething problems in the early stages. However, he is not aware of ongoing reliability issues with these aircraft. He said that there may be efficiencies to be gained for Flybe having only one type of aircraft based at GBBCA in terms of streamlining engineering and crew capability. That being said, if the airline's performance continues to improve it may operate jet aircraft at GBBCA again in the future.

A number of Members congratulated the Airport on its apprenticeship scheme.

Mrs Weir advised Members that she had attended an event in Stormont the previous day. At this event, the Minister for Employment and Learning announced a new strategy for apprenticeships targeting higher skilled employment. Mrs Weir queried if GBBCA would consider taking on higher skilled apprentices as part of its scheme. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport's apprenticeship scheme is designed to target young people with little or no skills or qualifications who cannot secure employment for these reasons.

Mr Walker drew Members attention to the article in the current issue of Agenda NI focusing on Corporate Responsibility at GBBCA which was circulated with the meeting papers. Mr Walker noted that Mr Wright had previously suggested that GBBCA promote more widely the Corporate Responsibility work it carries out.

5. 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.

Cllr Montgomery noted that a noise concern had come from the Newtownards area in relation to ground noise and requested further details. Miss Duggan responded that she believed that the concern in question was in relation to noise at night but would confirm this and respond to Cllr Montgomery directly.

Action: Miss Duggan

Mr Walker noted the latest CR Summary from GBBCA which sets out recent CR activities carried out by GBBCA and the projects supported by its Community Fund.

Mr Walker advised Member that Mr Hoey was unable to attend the meeting but had put forward a number of questions for the Airport – as follows:

When can Members expect work to start in redeveloping the Airport's carpark?

Mr Ambrose responded that considerable investment has already been made by GBBCA this year on upgrading the existing car parks. Works carried out to date have included: resurfacing; relining; and zoning the pedestrian walkways with safety bollards.

Would it be possible to move bicycle racks closer to the main entrance to the terminal to encourage passengers to use bicycles?

Mr Ambrose responded that unfortunately this would not be possible as there is a 30 metre stand-off area that the Airport needs to maintain under security regulations. The Airport cannot move the bicycle racks to within this area and for this reason the Airport considers the racks are currently at the closest point to the terminal building that they can be.

Would it be possible to research better types of luggage trolleys that are easier to handle and steer while on uneven surfaces?

Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport is currently sourcing new luggage trolleys and hopes to commence a change out of the trolleys from September this year. Mr Ambrose also explained that the current pavement leading to the terminal building is sloped to facilitate drainage but this can be difficult for trolley users. The pavement may be reviewed once the trolleys have been replaced.

Would it be possible to have a space at the front entrance for a sponsored charity garden that would be created and attended to by a local charity (such as the Ultra Rare Disease Disorders & Disabilities Foundation)?

Mr Ambrose responded that as per above, this is considered a "stand-off" area for security reasons.

Mr Walker suggested that the Forum Secretary write to Mr Hoey directly providing the Airport's responses to his questions.

Action: Forum Secretary

6. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Report from the Environmental Sub Group on 2 June 2014 which had been circulated in advance of the meeting was noted by Members.

7. FORUM DEPUTY CHAIR

Voting slips were collected from Members and reviewed by the Forum Chair. Mr Walker advised that 10 votes in favour of the appointment of Mrs Edwards as Deputy Chair of the Forum had been returned along with one null vote. On this basis, Mr Walker confirmed the

appointment of Mrs Edwards as Deputy Chair and advised Members that he would write her to inform her of the Forum's decision.

Action: Mr Walker

8. UKACCS 2014 MEETING

Mr Walker advised Members that due to other diary commitments, he was unable to attend the annual meeting of the Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees which was hosted by London Gatwick Airport at the end of May. However, a summary of the proceedings has been prepared by UKACCs and Mr Walker ran through the key points for Members – as follows:

8.1 Airport Commission Interim Report

A presentation was given by Philip Graham, Airports Commission Secretariat, at the meeting. The Airports Commission has published a discussion paper on "Utilisation of the UK's Existing Airports Capacity (Discussion Paper 06)" which focuses on the domestic and international connectivity provided by regional airports and airports serving London and the South East other than Heathrow and Gatwick. The deadline for responses is 25 July.

8.2 Regional Services at London Airport

The Airports Commission and the DfT acknowledge the need to examine whether the mechanisms in place to maintain the UK's domestic connectivity – linking regional centres as well as London – were being used in the best possible way.

The DfT is due to consult on the EU State Aid Guidance this summer.

8.3 New DfT Guidelines for ACC

A presentation was given by Tamara Goodwin, DfT, on the new draft guidelines for airport consultative committees.

Feedback from ACCs was received on a number of aspects of the guidelines such as the manageability of the membership (size) of committees and the duration of tenure of the committee chairs and deputy chairs.

8.4 CAA Consumer Panel

Keith Richards, Chair of the CAA Consumer Panel, provided an update on the work of the Panel over the past year and the issues being considered.

8.5 Membership of UKACCs

Durham Tees Valley Airport's membership of UKACCs was considered given the continued decline in passenger throughput at the Airport and it was agreed that their membership should cease.

Mr Walker advised Members that the summary of key points and outcomes would be circulated to Members with the meeting minutes.

Action: Forum Secretary

Mr Walker advised Members that presentations, meeting papers and minutes are available to access on the UKACCs website:

[\[http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting14.html\]](http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting14.html).

Mr Walker noted that membership to UKACCs continued to be supported by the Airport. He welcomed this membership as it serves as a useful forum to keep updated on developments in relation to UK and European aviation policy as well as in relation to other UK airports.

Mr Ambrose accepted questions from Forum Members regarding the UKACCs meeting.

In relation to the matter of domestic connectivity, Dr McCaughan queried if the Airport collects statistics on the number of passengers connecting via UK hubs as compared with other regional airports. Mr Ambrose responded that while the Airport does not collect statistics on this directly, he is aware that approximately 20% of GBBCA passengers travel with British Airways to London Heathrow Airport and of these passengers, approximately 35% are connecting to onward destinations. Mr Ambrose stated that given the range of onward destinations available at London Heathrow Airport, maintaining connectivity to this hub is very important for Northern Ireland.

Cllr Montgomery queried if given the number of passengers connecting to onward destinations and the range of destinations available through its network, should British Airways not be seeking to promote its network more heavily to attract passengers that would usually travel via Dublin Airport. Mr Ambrose responded that there are a number of factors which could make Dublin Airport more attractive to passengers such as: the ability to fly to many destinations directly; the facilities available at Dublin Airport including US pre-clearance; and the price of fares as flights to/from the Republic of Ireland are not subject to Air Passenger Duty. Air Passenger Duty is particularly material for long haul flights and when there is more than one passenger travelling under the same booking.

A discussion took place on the viability of increasing long haul direct services to/from Northern Ireland. Mr Ambrose said that based on passenger numbers, Dublin Airport is comparable to airports such as Manchester Airport in the UK. Given the catchment size of Northern Ireland, it would be better to draw a comparison to the likes of Bristol Airport when considering the demand for long haul direct services.

9. Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees

Mr Walker advised Members that the Department for Regional Development had provided a note to the Forum Chair to update Members on the Northern Ireland review of the guidelines for

airport consultative committees following the publication by DfT of the guidelines for committees in Great Britain in April this year. The Department has now reviewed the DfT guidelines and has produced draft guidelines applicable to committees in Northern Ireland. A submission has been prepared to be forwarded to the Department's Minister for approval. The Department will then be in a position to issue the draft guidelines for consultation shortly thereafter.

Mr Walker advised that Members would be made aware of the draft NI guidelines once they have been issued for consultation. If the consultation closes before the next meeting, Mr Walker suggested that a special meeting be convened to allow the Forum the chance to discuss the proposed guidelines.

Action: Forum Chair

10. AOB

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

- It has come to light that Thomas Cook has mistakenly charged Air Passenger Duty on tickets for a number of long haul flights from Northern Ireland following the abolishment of the duty from January last year. The airline has undertaken a review and has refunded the passengers affected.
- United Airlines has temporarily suspended its service between New York (Newark) and Belfast International Airport. The Consumer Council has clarified that the airline will be offering passengers a refund or an alternative flight to the same destination (if necessary, with another airline) as required under EU Regulations.
- 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 when technical faults that cause long delays to flights should be considered "extraordinary circumstances". The Court of Appeal has recently 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. This decision could have a significant impact on past rulings and future cases of this nature. The CAA has issued guidance on its website following the ruling. However, there may be further developments on the issue, with Jet2 confirming it intends to seek permission to appeal to the Supreme Court. The Consumer Council will update Members on this matter in due course.
- Thomson Airways has taken a case to the Court of Appeal regarding the time limit for bringing a compensation claim under the aforementioned regulations. The judges

upheld an earlier ruling confirming that the time limit for bringing a compensation claim under European law is six years in England and Wales. Thomson had argued that all delay claims for compensation are covered by the Montreal Convention, which limits claims to two years after an incident. The case may be appealed in a higher court so the final outcome is still to be determined.

- The Consumer Council has been monitoring the impact of the French Air Traffic Control strike this month and is reminding passengers of their rights if their flight is delayed or cancelled.

10.2 Dr McNamee queried with Mr Ambrose if GBBCA would consider a comparison with London City Airport (LCY) and the noise measures it has in place – in particular, a lower threshold for noise insulation (57 dB LAeq, 16hr vs. 63 dB LAeq, 16hr), more restrictive operating hours (LCY is closed between 12.30 hours on Saturday and 12:30 hours on Sunday), and a steeper descent profile (5.5 degrees at LCY vs. 3 degrees at GBBCA).

Mr Ambrose responded that while he noted Dr McNamee's point, LCY is authorised to operate up to 120,000 flights per annum as compared with 48,000 flights per annum at GBBCA. It also has a very different topography to GBBCA which would influence its descent profile. For these reasons, amongst others, the two airports are not directly comparable.

Dr McNamee noted that the comparison has been made in EU legislation as both LCY and GBBCA are designated as 'city airports'.

Mr Ambrose responded that GBBCA fully complies with the requirements set out in the relevant EU legislation but that when it comes to benchmarking operations, GBBCA looks to all UK airports and the standards that are set by UK government which apply to all UK airports.

11. DATE FOR 2014 MEETINGS

- Wednesday 26 November

Signed:  Date:

26/11/14

Alan Walker (Forum Chairman)

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