

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 71

Held on Wednesday, 20 November 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
Cllr John Montgomery	North Down Borough Council
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Mrs Julie Allen	Belfast City Council
Mrs Lisa Toland	Belfast City Council
Mr Jonny Currie	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Mr Scott Kennerley	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
Mr Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
Mr Christopher McFerran	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Mr Terry Hoey	Palmerstown Residents' Association
Capt. Harry Brady	Aer Lingus Base Captain
Mr Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport

Observers:

Dr Andrew Grieve	Department for Regional Development
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In attendance:

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

Apologies were received from:

Dr Colm McNamee	Park Road and District Residents' Association
Dr Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association
Mr Andrew Irvine	Belfast City Centre Management

Mr Walker welcomed all present to the meeting including Mr Harry Brady, Base Captain for Aer Lingus who is attending the Forum for the first time.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2013

The Chairman requested for the minutes from the previous meeting to be amended to include an apology from Mr John Moore. Otherwise the minutes were agreed as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Lack of coverage of Belfast and Northern Ireland in Aer Lingus's inflight magazine ('Cara').

Mr Ambrose advised Members that the Airport had raised this matter with Aer Lingus (EI) and the feedback was that as Belfast is only 1 of 100+ destinations that EI fly to, coverage per annum is limited. In addition, the magazine is not produced in-house so the EI marketing team has limited editorial control.

3.2 Aircraft departing over Belfast Lough not adhering to the noise abatement procedures

Mr Ambrose advised Members that overall conformance with the noise abatement procedure (NAP) for Runway 04 is good – >95% compliance on a monthly basis (based on the total number of departures on 04).

However, there are incidents of non-conformance which GBBCA are addressing with the airline in question. GBBCA has been advised that non-conformance is often due to a lack of awareness of the procedures by non-Belfast based crew. Actions have been taken by the airline to amend and strengthen the information given to pilots to make them aware of the NAPs although the airline are of the view that a permanent solution to the problem would be the publication of a Standard Instrument Departure (SID) for Runway 04 which they can put into their Flight Management System database.

GBBCA have committed to investigating the feasibility of introducing a SID on Runway 04 as part of its Noise Action Plan 2013-18.

3.3 Forum response to the consultation on GBBCA's Noise Action Plan 2013-18

Mr Walker advised Members that a response to the consultation on GBBCA's draft Noise Action Plan 2013-18 had been drafted to reflect the discussion that took place at the June Forum meeting. This response was intended to summarise the range of views that were expressed about various aspects of the plan. The response was submitted to the Airport and a copy could be made available to Members by request to the Forum Secretary.

Mr Currie queried if a copy of the final Noise Action Plan could be made available to Members. Miss Duggan advised Mr Currie that the Noise Action Plan was currently with the DoE for review and final adoption. Once the Plan has been formally agreed with the DoE and adopted by the Environment Minister, it would be published on the DoE Noise website. The timescale for completion of the process is not certain at this stage.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr Ambrose delivered an update to Members on the following:

4.1 Business Performance

The trend continues to be positive in terms of passenger numbers and GBBCA is forecasting approximately 2.6 million passengers by year end. This is more in line with 2010 performance when Ryanair were operating at GBBCA.

4.2 Route Development

Aer Lingus commenced its new European routes (to Faro, Malaga and Palma) at the end of March 2013. These routes are performing very well with passenger loads of above 80% on average.

4.3 Capital Expenditure

Approximately £1.7 million of expenditure has been invested in 2013 to deliver a number of key capital projects including the upgrade of an aircraft stand to facilitate the arrival of Aer Lingus, the expansion of the car parking facilities and the development of the International Arrivals Hall.

4.4 Community Fund £100K Milestone

GBBCA was pleased to host a reception with Junior Minister Jennifer McCann and Junior Minister Jonathan Bell at Parliament Buildings on 16 October 2013 to celebrate the Community Fund reaching its £100K milestone. GBBCA had in fact exceeded the £100K milestone by the time the event took place as approximately £135K had been committed to projects by that date. The event was well attended and a number of Forum Members were present.

4.5 NI Events

Northern Ireland hosted a number of major international events in 2013 which contributed to increased footfall at GBBCA, including the G8 Summit in Fermanagh (which was attended by President Obama) in June and the World Police and Fire Games in August. These events have helped to raise the profile of Belfast and Northern Ireland internationally and have contributed significantly to the NI economy.

4.6 High Flyers Apprenticeship Scheme

GBBCA launched its 'High Flyers Apprenticeship Scheme' in 2013. The scheme is designed to address the issue of unemployment amongst young people in the community which was raised by local councillors and elected representatives. The Airport is offering placements for up to 2 years for young people aged 16-24 from the greater Belfast area. GBBCA have teamed up with a local training provider and the apprentices will be working towards a NVQ qualification whilst on placement. The scheme is being delivered in conjunction with a number of the Airport's business partners – Autogrill, Costa Coffee, O'Brien's Sandwich Bar, House of Ireland, WH Smith and World Duty Free – to give young people a variety of airport experience. The placements will also be supported by training at the Airport in the areas of CV writing, job application writing and interview skills.

4.7 New Taxi Provider

Due to a number of ongoing issues with the incumbent taxi provider, GBBCA has recently changed its taxi provider to Value Cabs.

4.8 Awards

GBBCA was delighted to have received a number of awards this year – 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'.

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

Mr Walker commended the Community Fund event at Parliament Buildings and said that it was a testament to the success the Fund as well as the High Flyers Apprenticeship Scheme judging by the fine contribution made by the apprentice present on the day.

Mr Walker queried if there were specific deadlines for the Community Fund or if applications are accepted at any time.

***Post meeting note:** There are two deadlines for Community Fund applications (15 July and 15 January) which applicants are encouraged to adhere to. However, applications may be considered in the interim at the discretion of the CR Team usually for time critical projects.*

Mr Hoey asked if the apprenticeship scheme is open to individuals with a disability and from what geographic area. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport is an equal opportunities employer and is seeking applicants from across Belfast.

Mr Hoey suggested that the Airport should consider having an information point at Connswater centre to attract young people from that area. Mr Ambrose advised that the Airport is primarily working with training organisations and elected representatives to recruit apprentices at this time.

5. 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 concerns

Mr Walker noted that there continues to be a high number of extensions on the Flybe Birmingham route and whether the Airport was looking into this. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport works with its airlines on a route-by-route basis. However, it is unsurprising that there are a higher number of extensions on the Birmingham route due to the greater frequency of service (5 rotations per day) as compared with other routes operated by Flybe.

Mr Wright noted that the number of noise concerns received in 2013 year to date has increased almost 50% on the previous year and queried how many concerns were made by individual complainants. Mr Ambrose noted that there was a peak in complaints received April and May this year due to the commencement of the summer schedule. Complaints of this nature have reduced since then. Also, the number of complaints received tends to increase when there is coverage of the Airport in local media.

Miss Duggan responded that a number of the noise concerns were received by the same individual. As a result, the number of individual noise concerns was lower than the total number of noise concerns received – 74 vs. 121 respectively 2013 ytd.

Mr Currie noted that GBBCA's *Charity of the Year* partnership with Macmillan Cancer is due to conclude at the end of 2013 and queried how the Airport selected a charity for this purpose and if charities can apply for this position. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport's Charity of the Year tends to be nominated by Airport staff.

6. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Report from the Environmental Sub Group on 21 October 2013 that had been circulated in advance of the meeting was noted by Members.

7. CAR PARKING

Mr Walker conveyed to Members his experiences of congestion in the short term car park and difficulty securing a car parking space on a number of occasions during the summer period this year and noted the related press coverage and asked if the Airport could comment on what it is doing to resolve this issue given the future growth that is expected.

Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport acknowledges the capacity issues it faced with its car parks earlier this year and has sought to address these issues in part by creating an additional 200 spaces in an overflow area for use by Airport staff members. Further capacity improvements are planned for 2014. Mr Ambrose noted that other related infrastructure improvements in terms of lighting and a covered walkway would be desirable but these improvements were dependent on additional funding being secured.

Mr Hoey queried what would happen to the front of the Airport site should the Sydenham Bypass be extended to 3 lanes each way. Mr Ambrose said that there was additional space to accommodate for the expansion of the Bypass and the Airport site would be unaffected as a result.

A number of Members noted their disappointment that a rail halt had not yet been developed to connect directly with the Airport terminal. Mr Ambrose responded that the Airport would welcome such a development but it was unlikely to be progressed at this time due to the size of the existing rail network in Northern Ireland and the small percentage of people who currently travel by rail. Due to the Airport's close proximity to the city centre, bus and taxi tend to be the preferred travel options by non-car users.

Mr Moore queried if GBBCA or DRD Roads Service would consider a covered walkway for the footbridge at the Sydenham rail halt. Mr Ambrose responded that this would be unlikely due to the high cost of doing so.

Mr Kennerley commented that the Consumer Council had responded to the consultation on the DfT's draft Aviation Policy Framework to query how the matter of transport and planning would be dealt with at a devolved level. Mr Kennerley stressed the importance of a holistic approach to transport and the development of surface access to/from the Airport. Given the existing infrastructure and resulting level of car dependency, car parking charges are of particular concern to the Council. Mr Ambrose responded that car parking charges vary depending on when the booking is made and there are a range of options for potential users.

Mr Walker concluded the discussion by summarising that Members were broadly in agreement that a rail halt opposite the Airport terminal would be desirable and that it was the responsibility of all Members to raise this issue with the relevant bodies and elected representatives.

8. FORUM DEPUTY CHAIR

Mr Walker advised Members of the need to recruit a Forum Deputy Chair and summarised the terms of reference for the position.

Mr Kennerley queried if expressions of interest should be sought from the public through advertising the position. A discussion took place on this and Members agreed that due to the specialist nature of the position they should seek to identify potential candidates from their own networks in the first instance. Mr Walker proposed that the recruitment process for the positions of Chair and Deputy Chair could be looked at when the overall terms of reference for the Forum are next reviewed.

Mr Walker advised Members that he would liaise with the Forum Secretary for correspondence to be sent to Members for nominations to be put forward in advance of the next Forum meeting.

9. AOB

Mr Currie advised Members that the CAA is currently undertaking a survey on the experiences of disabled and elderly people travelling by air.

Post meeting note: the CAA survey can be accessed via the following link:
<http://www.caa.co.uk/application.aspx?catid=14&pagetype=65&appid=7&mode=detail&nid=231>

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The deadline for responses is 10 January 2014.

Mr Walker advised Members that the DfT are planning to publish revised Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees in draft in December 2013 which should allow the revised Guidelines to be issued in March 2014.

10. DATE FOR 2014 MEETINGS

- Wednesday 26 March
- Wednesday 25 June
- Wednesday 26 November

Signed:



Date:

2/4/14

Alan Walker (Forum Chairman)
AW/ld