

**GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM**  
**Minutes of Meeting No. 88**  
**Held on Wednesday 20 March 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
Mr. Ciaran Crosbie	Department for Infrastructure (DfI)
Mr. Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr. Raymond McNair	George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA)
Mrs. Jenny Redman	Consumer Council Northern Ireland
Mr. Richard Williams	Consumer Council Northern Ireland

**In attendance:**

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

**Apologies:**

Ms. Karen Boutros	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Mr. Jonny Currie	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Dr. Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association

The Forum Chair welcomed Mr. Ciaran Crosbie and Mr. Richard Williams to the meeting. Mr. Crosbie and Mr. Williams are temporarily taking over the role of Forum representative for their organisations from Mr. Crutchley and Mr. Kennerley respectively, who have both moved to new roles.

**2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 21 NOVEMBER 2018**

Members agreed that the minutes represented an accurate record of the meeting. However, Mrs. Redman noted an error with her surname in the minutes. The Forum Secretary advised that she would correct this error following the meeting and reissue the minutes to Members.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

None

**4. AIRPORT DIRECTOR REPORT**

**4.1 Business Performance**

The business performed well in 2018 with 2.5 million passengers recorded by year end. 2019 passenger numbers are expected to be in line with 2018.

**4.2 Route Development**

Since the last meeting, Flybe has been acquired by Connect Airways, a consortium comprising of Virgin Atlantic and Stobart Aviation, which each hold 30% of the capital, and fund management company, Cyrus Capital, which holds the remaining 40%. With Virgin Atlantic's strong presence at major hubs such as Manchester and London Gatwick, GBBCA is hoping that this will open up possible opportunities for connections to international routes.

Similarly, Stobart Air currently own London Southend Airport and Carlisle Lake District Airport which could potentially open up further route opportunities for GBBCA. GBBCA continues to be in close contact with Flybe's senior team and it has been assured that there will not be any significant changes to existing operations until the airline's new strategy has been defined.

Loganair is to commence operations from GBBCA to Carlisle Lake District Airport on 4 July with a 1 flight per day service, 5 days a week. The route will be serviced by a Saab 340 aircraft.

There will be additional rotations to/from London Heathrow in June to August this year operated by Aer Lingus. Aer Lingus will also operate its routes from GBBCA to Faro and Malaga again in the 2019 summer season.

#### **4.3 Corporate Responsibility**

GBBCA continues to engage in a range of CR activity as detailed in the CR Summary for the period November 2018 to February 2019 included with the Forum papers, already circulated.

GBBCA would like to highlight its new charity partnership with The Welcome Organisation (homelessness charity). The airport will be working with the charity over the next 12 months on several fundraising and awareness raising initiatives.

#### **4.4 Capital Expenditure**

The airport is now reaping the benefits of its significant capital investment in the terminal reconfiguration in 2018. It has received positive feedback from passengers, in particular, on security processing times (less than 6 minutes wait time on average) and the extended food & beverage and retail offering.

Mr. McNair accepted questions from Members on the Director Report.

Mr. Doherty queried whether Carlisle Lake District Airport will be operational by the date the route from GBBCA is scheduled to commence. Mr. McNair responded that GBBCA has received assurances that the airport will be fully operational by this date.

Mrs. Redman noted that it has come to the Consumer Council's attention that some passengers are having issues with Flybe's recent change in cabin baggage policy. She queried whether the airport had received feedback from passengers on this. Mr. McNair responded that Flybe's cabin baggage policy, in terms of permitted dimensions for cabin baggage, has not changed but that Flybe has commenced actively enforcing this policy. The rationale for its specific restrictions on cabin bag dimensions is to ensure that bags taken on board the aircraft can fit in its overhead containers. If they do not, then such bags would need to be removed from the aircraft and placed in the hold. This process has resulted in delayed departures. However, GBBCA is keen for the enforcement of this policy not to impact negatively on the passenger experience. For this reason, it has sought to encourage Flybe to use its cardboard rather than metal bag sizers as they tend to be more flexible.

### **5. AIRPORT STATISTICS**

The Airport Statistics reports for the period November 2018-February 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: 2018 noise concerns; Report 8: 2019 noise concerns; Report 9: Customer Insights Survey Summary Results Q4 2018; Appendix 1: GBBCA Corporate Responsibility Report.

Mr. McNair accepted questions from Members on these reports.

Regarding the reasons stated for delayed flights after 21:30 hours in the reporting period, Mr. Andrews queried what 'technical issues' refer to. Mr. McNair responded that this would refer to issues with the aircraft itself. For safety reasons, an aircraft's departure would be delayed until the technical issue is resolved.

Mr. Walker queried whether PRM service delays were owing to passengers not providing advanced notification of their assistance requirements. Ms. Duggan responded that the delays in question during this reporting period were due to additional time required to board or disembark wheelchair passengers.

Regarding the number of delays after 21:30 hours, Mr. Williams queried how GBBCA compared with other airports. Mr. McNair responded that it is difficult to compare the performance in this regard as very few airports in the UK have restricted hours similar to GBBCA. However, in terms of delays in general, based on the statistics from the CAA, GBBCA is one of the most punctual airports in the UK.

Regarding Report 5, Belfast Lough Bias, the narrow margin of 51% across all months was noted, albeit the airport still complied with the bias requirement (>50% of all flights departing or landing over Belfast Lough). In response to a query from Mr. Williams on the Belfast Lough bias, Mrs. Allen advised that its purpose is for noise reduction as fewer people live under the flight path in the Belfast Lough direction. Mr. McNair highlighted that the direction of departure or arrival is dependent on wind conditions as aircraft must take-off and land by flying into the wind.

Regarding Report 6 on movements by aircraft type, Mr. Walker noted that the Boeing 737 Max 8, which has been suspended from operating in the UK, among other countries, after two fatal crashes recently, does not operate at GBBCA currently.

Regarding Report 7-8 on noise concerns, Mr. Andrews queried how to log a noise concern with the airport. Ms. Duggan responded that this could be done online via the Contact Us link on the airport's website, via the noise hotline (which is a dedicated voicemail service), in writing via letter or comment card, or through the airport's social media channels.

Regarding Report 9, Mr. McNair advised that he was pleased how the customer insights survey results in Q4 2018 reflected the significant improvements that had been made as part of the terminal reconfiguration project. For example, 100% of respondents in the survey rated the security facilities as excellent or good. This represents an increase from 85% on the previous survey which was carried out prior to the security upgrade (Q1 2018). In addition, 96% of respondents rated the Flight Information Display Screens (FIDS) as excellent or good representing an improvement of 8% on the previous survey.

Mr. Walker queried whether the airport expected responses on the 'comfort of waiting areas' to be more positive in light of the departure lounge upgrade (60% of passengers rated the comfort of waiting areas as either excellent or good). Mr. McNair responded that this could be considered a more subjective matter than others. That being said, the score of 60% represented a significant improvement from 34% in the previous survey.

Mr. Walker noted that there hadn't been sufficient responses on the car park facilities in this survey to report on. He queried whether the airport could seek to include feedback on this area in future reports. Mr. McNair responded that the airport would take this request on board when carrying out future surveys.

**Action:** Mr. McNair

Regarding Appendix 1, Mr. Walker noted that the airport's Community Fund criteria has recently been reviewed and queried whether a link to the new criteria could be circulated to Members with the meeting minutes.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

Regarding the Adopt-A-School scheme, Mrs. Edwards queried if this scheme extends to post-primary schools also. Ms. Duggan responded that the scheme was designed for primary schools but that the airport engages with post-primary schools through a range of other CR initiatives.

Mr. Walker highlighted to Members that the two newest recruits of the airport's High Flyers scheme, Katie Wilgar and Dean McGlade, will be graduating shortly after completing the first modules of their apprentice firefighter training. He congratulated them on this achievement.

## **6. ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP**

The minutes of the Environmental Sub Group (ESG) meeting which took place on 20 February circulated with the Forum papers, were noted by Members.

Mr. Walker highlighted to Members that, as per the Forum constitution, Members are encouraged to attend at least one ESG meeting per year.

**Action:** Forum Members

## **7. AVIATION STRATEGY**

Mr. Crosbie provided Members with an update on the development of a new Aviation Strategy. Since the last meeting, the Government has issued a green paper for consultation. Initially, the consultation was due to close on 11 April 2019, however, the Government has decided to extend the deadline to 20 June to provide further time for stakeholders to consider its proposals and submit their consultation responses. This extension will not apply to specific questions on legislative airspace change proposals, however, which are being consulted on alongside the green paper. The closing date for responses to these questions is still 11 April.

Mr. Crosbie delivered a presentation to Members on the key points of the Aviation Strategy consultation green paper.

Mr. Crosbie advised Members that the Department for Transport (DfT) is intending to facilitate a stakeholder event in Northern Ireland in May, the exact date of this event is to be confirmed. He advised Members that if there are any specific issues that they would like further information on at this event, it would be helpful if they could feed these issues back to him in advance to enable the relevant representatives to be in attendance and to be in a position to respond to them.

Mr. Williams queried whether a specific date for feedback could be communicated to Members. Mr. Walker also queried whether it would be possible to host an evening event to enable Forum members, who have other work commitments during the day, to attend. He suggested that this event could be a joint event with the other NI airport fora. Mr. Crosbie noted these requests and advised that he would feed them back to DfT.

**Action:** Mr. Crosbie

Regarding sustainability issues, Mr. Williams queried whether it would be likely that the Aviation Strategy will address these issues to such a degree as to enable individuals who

avoid flying for environmental reasons to embrace this form of travel. Ms. Duggan responded that the aviation industry in the UK is taking significant steps to manage its environmental impacts. For example, the industry working group Sustainable Aviation has set a range of goals and commitments covering climate change, noise and local air quality out to 2050. At a global level, the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) has developed a global carbon offsetting and reduction scheme for international aviation called CORSIA. CORSIA is aimed at capping net carbon emissions for the international aviation industry at 2020 levels by offsetting any additional emissions. It is the first global carbon emissions-offsetting agreement for any industry sector. Ms. Duggan advised that further information on SA and CORSIA had been provided to Members at the last ESG meeting but that this information could be circulated with the meeting minutes.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

Mr. Walker highlighted that the green paper addresses the area of slot allocation and noted the importance of protecting slots for Northern Ireland into London Heathrow in future developments.

Mrs. Edwards noted the importance of seeking feedback from citizens/consumer groups on their needs and experiences.

## **8. COMMUNITY GROUPS**

### **8.1 Membership review proposals**

Mr. Walker advised Members that a vote on the proposed changes to Community Group membership criteria was due to take place at this meeting. However, the quorum for this meeting (as per the Forum Constitution) has not been reached. Therefore, it is necessary for this vote to be postponed until the next meeting.

**Action:** Forum Chair/Deputy Chair

### **8.2 Paperwork required**

Mr. Walker reminded those Members representing Community Groups to provide the information requested in the Forum Constitution s7.3.1 to the Forum Secretary for 2018 by the end of June – as follows:

- Minutes of the last AGM and the number in attendance at the AGM;
- Number of registered members in the group;
- Names and contact details of the office bearers of the group elected at the AGM; and
- Number of occasions the group has met during the previous year.

**Action:** Community Group Members

## **9. DRONES**

Mr. Walker advised Members that in light of the recent issues with drones causing disruption to operations at London Gatwick and elsewhere, he and the Deputy Chair had posed a number of questions to the airport to respond to on this matter. Mr. McNair responded to these questions as follows:

- What protocols does the airport have if a drone incident was to occur?

GBBCA is certified by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) and to comply with the terms of this certificate, GBBCA needs to ensure that developments surrounding the airfield or activities do not compromise any aspect of the operation. Aerodrome safeguarding ensures

the safety of aircraft in the vicinity of an aerodrome by controlling potentially hazardous development and activity around it, including drones. The airport has an aerodrome safeguarding procedure in place with a flowchart of responsibilities in the event of a drone incident. The airport's Duty Managers are trained threat assessors and will work in conjunction with Air Traffic Control. There is a task-card for Security and Airfield Operations to provide assistance to locate the drone operator. Assistance can also be provided from NATS (Air Traffic Control), Harbour Police, PSNI and specialist drone consultants.

- Are there divert arrangement in place with other local airports?

Yes, all aircraft must nominate a divert airport prior to departure and must carry sufficient fuel to reach this airport if required.

- Who would lead the response to such an incident? Airport or security forces.

The airport would lead as outlined above.

- Are there any additional considerations in context of Kinnegar Army base and Palace Barracks?

They may have their own drone policies (as Belfast Harbour do) in addition to the Airport Flight Restriction Zone (FRZ) but the Airport FRZ legal requirements apply first.

- Have there been any new requirements placed on the airport as a result of the Gatwick and Heathrow incidents?

Yes – new regulations have been put in place from 13 March 2019 which include increasing FRZs around airports. Further details can be found on the GBBCA website (under [About Us/Aerodrome Safeguarding](#)).

- On a practical level, what would happen to passengers impacted by a drone related closure, for example, with car parking charges?

Passengers would be treated in same way as they would be in the event of a cancelled or severely disrupted flight.

## **10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mr. Walker advised Members that Ms. Duggan will be leaving her post as Environmental Manager at the airport and as Forum Secretary at the end of the month as she is relocating to Wales. He thanked Ms. Duggan on behalf of Members for her contribution to the Forum over the past ten years and wished her all the best in her future endeavours.

## **11. DATES FOR 2019 MEETINGS**

Tbc

**Signed:**

**Date:**

**Mr. Walker (Forum Chair) AW/ld**