

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No. 81

Held on Wednesday 22nd March 2017 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Attendees:

Mr. Alan Walker	Forum Chair
Mrs. Carol Edwards	Forum Deputy Chair
Mrs. Julie Allen	Belfast City Council, Environmental Health
Mr. Scott Kennerley	Consumer Council Northern Ireland
Mr. Christopher McFerran	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Mr. Raymond McNair	George Best Belfast City Airport
Ms. Edel Mullan	Belfast City Council, Economic Development
Mr. Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
Alderman W.D. Keery	Ards and North Down Borough Council
Mr. Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Cllr. Adam Newton	Belfast City Council

In attendance:

Ms. Laura Duggan	Forum Secretary
Mr. Dermot O'Kane	Belfast City Council, Local Development Plan
Ms. Anne Doherty	Belfast City Council, Local Development Plan

1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

Apologies were received from:

Capt. James McKnight	Flybe Base Captain
Mr. Jonny Currie	East Belfast Community Development Agency
Mr. Terry Hoey	Palmerstown Residents' Association
Ms. Susie Browne	Tourism Northern Ireland
Dr. Daniel V. McCaughan	Cultra Residents' Association

The Forum Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 23 NOVEMBER 2016

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

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 In relation to the passenger complaint regarding the accessibility of the International Arrivals walkway and staircase, Mr Kennerley advised Members that the airport has confirmed that a member of the PRM team would be present at the foot of the stairway for all international arrivals to assist any passengers with mobility issues regardless of whether assistance had been pre-booked. This matter is now closed.

4. BELFAST CITY COUNCIL LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONSULTATION

Representatives from Belfast City Council's (BCC) Local Development Plan (LDP) team delivered a presentation to Forum Members on the LDP Preferred Options Paper consultation document. Following the presentation, Members raised the following comments and queries:

- Mr Wright highlighted the need to improve the aesthetics of some areas, in particular, due to derelict properties, hoardings and estate agent signs being left up for long periods.
- Regarding encouraging city centre living, Alderman Keery queried whether there was sufficient capacity to accommodate the increase in population projected in the LDP. Cllr Newton noted the re-development plans for Titanic Quarter which included residential accommodation and queried whether these plans would be progressed. Cllr Newton also queried whether foreign direct investors are incentivised to include residential accommodation in new developments in the city centre.
- In relation to connectivity and public transport, Mr Kennerley highlighted the need for engagement and a joined-up approach to planning between both BCC and the Department for Infrastructure and BCC and neighbouring councils to ensure better connectivity to/from Belfast and the wider region. Mr. Kennerley also queried whether there is a statutory requirement on developers to require access to public transport services. Mr Walker highlighted the challenge currently faced by passengers trying to access the airport early morning.

In relation to Titanic Quarter re-development, Mr. Doherty advised that there was outline consent for 2,000 residential apartments but due to the economic downturn, the development did not proceed. However, this will be kept under review as the economy improves.

Mr Walker thanked the BCC representatives for delivering the LDP presentation. He noted that the Forum is not a consensus body and for this reason it will not be responding to the consultation directly but would be happy to share with BCC the points raised at the meeting.

Action: Forum Secretary

Organisations represented on the Forum may wish to respond directly to the consultation which closes on 20th April 2017.

5. AIRPORT DIRECTOR REPORT

Mr. McNair delivered an update to Members on the following:

5.1 Business Performance

Passenger numbers in 2016 were in line with 2015 at 2.7m. In 2017, passenger numbers are expected to be approximately 5% lower than in 2016 due to a capacity reduction on some Flybe routes and the cessation of the London Gatwick route previously operated by Aer Lingus.

5.2 Route Development

GBBCA is pleased to announce the commencement of a new route to Reykjavik from 1st June operated by Icelandair. Icelandair will provide a full year-round service three times a week between Belfast City and Reykjavik. From Reykjavik, passengers can connect with Icelandair's wide network of destinations in the US and Canada.

Eastern Airways has introduced a new route from Belfast City to the Isle of Man commencing on 13th March to replace the service operated by Citywing.

Brussels Airlines has announced that it will cease operating its route from Belfast City to Brussels at the end of March due to underperformance.

5.3 Capital Expenditure

GBBCA is estimating to spend approximately £2m in 2017 subject to budget approval. The airport continues with its toilet refurbishment project, currently upgrading the toilets in the Arrivals Hall.

5.4 Corporate Responsibility

Details of recent CR initiatives are set out in the summary provided for the period Dec 2016-Mar 2017 which has been included with the Forum papers. GBBCA is pleased at the continuing success of its High Flyers Apprenticeship Scheme with the airport's Business Admin Apprentice completing the programme and moving on to further employment.

5.5 Ownership

Members may have noted in the media that the airport's current owners EISER Infrastructure Fund are selling their portfolio of assets, which includes the airport, to the investment company 3i. The sale is estimated to be completed in April this year.

Mr. McNair accepted questions from Members on the Airport Director's Report.

In relation to the airport's apprenticeship scheme, Ms. Mullan noted that Employment East are offering 26-week apprenticeship placements funded by OFMDFM which might be of interest to the airport. Ms. Mullan to provide the details to the Forum Secretary following the meeting.

Action: Ms. Mullan

Cllr. Newton advised Members that the Belfast Marathon organisers are currently looking for volunteers to assist on the day. Further details are available on the event website.

6. AIRPORT STATISTICS

The Airport Statistics reports for the period Nov 2016-Feb 2017 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: Flights over Belfast Lough; Report 5: Flights by aircraft type; Report 6: 2016 and 2017 noise concerns by type and area; Report 7: 2016 vs. 2017 ytd noise concerns by month.*

Mr. Walker welcomed the reduction in delays post 21:30 hours in 2017 to date, in particular, on the Birmingham and Manchester routes operated by Flybe.

Mr. Wright noted that the number of concerns had increased in 2016 compared to 2015 but that there were no concerns from the Kinnegar area despite its proximity to the airport. Mr. Kennerley queried if the concerns received were from individuals or groups. Ms. Duggan responded that in most cases, the concerns have come from individuals.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

7.1 Report from the Environmental Sub Group

The minutes from the Environmental Sub Group (ESG) meeting on 1st March circulated with the Forum papers, were noted by Members.

Mrs. Allen suggested that the presentation given by Mr. Cockcroft from NATS (National Air Traffic Services) at the last ESG would be of interest to all Members. For this reason, it was agreed that the Forum would extend an invitation to Mr. Cockcroft to attend a future meeting to deliver this presentation.

Action: Forum Secretary

8. AVIATION CONSULTATIONS

Mr. Walker noted that the following consultations might be of interest to Forum Members:

- DfT: Safe Use of drones in the UK – closing 15th March
- DfT: Draft Airports National Policy Statement – closing 25th May
- DfT: Draft UK Airspace Policy – closing 25th May

Ms. Duggan advised Members that an email had been sent to all Members on behalf of Mr. Gillespie, from the Department for Infrastructure, regarding the consultation event on the Draft Airports National Policy Statement and UK Airspace Policy taking place in the Waterfront Hall, Belfast on 3rd April 2017. Members wishing to attend should register via the link sent in the email.

9. FLYBE SCHEDULING ERROR FOR SUMMER 2017 SEASON

Mr. Walker noted a matter raised at the last ESG meeting, whereby in December 2016, several flights were available for booking on the Flybe website for the summer 2017 season that were scheduled to arrive or depart outside the airport's scheduled operating hours. GBBCA promptly raised this matter with Flybe and it was subsequently resolved as noted in the ESG minutes. Mr. Walker advised Members that he understood the concern but that he is content that it was an administrative error and that there was no risk that the flights would indeed operate at these times.

10. CAA AIRPORT SURFACE ACCESS REVIEW REPORT

Ms. Duggan advised that the CAA had conducted a review of market conditions for surface access at UK airports to understand: i) how competitive conditions for road and forecourt access at individual UK airports affect outcomes for consumers; and ii) the extent to which consumers are well informed about their options to access UK airports and the charges they face. The CAA concluded that the range of choice of surface access services available to passengers varies considerably by airport. While there was not sufficient evidence of features amounting to adverse effects on competition, they decided to issue an advisory letter with a recommendation that airports review their practices.

Ms. Duggan advised that this letter had been reviewed by GBBCA and it had not identified any areas in which it falls below the CAA's recommendations. GBBCA competitively tenders its car hire and taxis services, and does not provide bus and coach services but gives full site access to

public transport and private coach hire onsite. It does not have any price maintenance agreements in place with online distributors. GBBCA publishes all modes of transport to/from the airport on its website and parking charges for all car parks as well as access arrangements and free/reduced parking charges for disabled customers.

Mr. Kennerley noted that the role of the CAA in surface access transport strategies does not cover Northern Ireland and so this study did not include NI airports. However, he welcomed the airport's review of the recommendations.

11. ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Mr. Kennerley advised Members that if a customer has an unresolved complaint with the airport, the airport is required to give the customer the details of an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) body. If the complaint is in relation to PRM, then the customer would be signposted to Consumer Council Northern Ireland.

12. AOB

Mr. Walker advised Member that the Deputy Chair will be in position for three years by the June meeting and so the position will need to be reviewed as per the Forum Constitution. A vote to determine whether the Deputy Chair should stay on in the position will take place at the next meeting.

Mr. Walker requested that Members of community organisations that have not yet submitted the information required about their organisations, as set out in the Forum Constitution, to do so before the next meeting. If the information is not received, the Chair will need to formally write to the organisation to advise that their seat will be made available for other organisations to apply for.

Mr. Kennerley thanked the airport for facilitating the Consumer Council displaying posters in the terminal regarding their role in passenger rights.

13. DATES FOR 2017 MEETINGS

Proposed dates for meetings in 2017 are 28th June and 22nd November.

Signed: 
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Date: 03-08-2017

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