

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No.62

Held on Wednesday, 17th November in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Present:	Mr. Alan Crowe	Chairman
	Mr. Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport
	Mr. Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
	Mr. Patrick Knatchbull	Cultra Residents' Association
	Mr. Christopher McFerran	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
	Mr. Colm McNamee	Park Road and District Residents' Association
	Mr. Terry Hoey	Palmerston Residents Association
	Mrs. Lisa Toland	Belfast City Council
	Cllr. Cathal Mullaghan	Belfast City Council
	Mrs. Julie Allen	Belfast City Council
	Mr. Sean Coulter	Department for Regional Development
	Capt. Ian Ewer	Base Captain Bmi
	Mr. Andy McClenaghan	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
	Mr. Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
	Mr. John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce

In attendance:

Ms. Laura Duggan	Forum Secretary
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1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Mr. Alan Walker	Vice Chairman
Alderman Leslie Cree	North Down Borough Council
Cllr. Robin Newton	Belfast City Council

WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting. The Chairman also welcomed Mr. Christopher McFerran who has taken over from Mr. John Prifti as the Forum representative for Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association. Mr. Prifti has now 'retired' from the Forum. The Chairman expressed his gratitude to Mr. Prifti for his long serving commitment to the Forum and requested permission from members to write to Mr. Prifti expressing their thanks and good wishes. All present agreed.

Action: Mr. Crowe

Ms. Duggan advised members that she had received communication from Mr. McNair – Marmont & District Community Association – that he has resigned from his position in the Association for personal reasons and for this reason he would have to resign from his position as Forum representative. Ms. Duggan has contacted the chairman of the Association and they are seeking to appoint another Forum representative at present.

2. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 23rd JUNE 2010

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 Ms. Duggan advised members that the minutes from the Forum meeting on 31st March 2010 had been uploaded to the BCA Forum web page.
- 3.2 Ms. Duggan advised members that the tour of the airport facilities had taken place prior to the meeting with Mr. Knatchbull, Mrs. Allen and Mr. Wright present.
- 3.3 Ms. Duggan confirmed that contact details for the Community Fund co-ordinator were circulated to Forum members with the previous minutes. These details are also available on the GBBCA website.
- 3.4 Ms. Duggan confirmed that the Environmental Sub Group minutes had been circulated to Forum members with the previous meeting minutes.
- 3.5 Ms. Duggan confirmed that the documented evidence justifying the imposition of the 'seats-for-sale' restriction on GBBCA had been sent to Cllr. Mullaghan.

The Chairman advised members that a letter had been sent to the Planning Service on 24th August 2010 in response to the consultation on the proposal to remove the 'seats-for-sale' limit at GBBCA. It stated that the matter had been discussed but that the Forum did not reach a consensus view on the proposal and as such it has adopted a neutral position. A copy of this letter was circulated to members by the Forum Secretary.

4. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

Mr. Ambrose delivered an update to members on the following:

4.1 Route Development:

- Ryanair has withdrawn all routes from GBBCA as of 31st October 2010 – East Midlands, Liverpool, Prestwick, Bristol and London Stansted – accounting for approximately 900,000 passengers through GBBCA. This move has put 496 jobs potentially at risk across the GBBCA site. For GBBCA, the withdrawal of Ryanair results in the airport dropping from a 'Category 7' to 'Category 6' which has implications for the size of the

airport fire service team required to be on shift at any one time – that is, one full-time fire-fighter less will be required for each of the 3 fire fighting crews.

- Flybe has backfilled the East Midlands, Liverpool and Bristol routes and has added an additional rotation to the Glasgow route. However, as Flybe operates at a considerably smaller capacity to Ryanair, this will only account for approximately 350,000 of the 900,000 passengers lost.
- At present, the London Stansted route remains unfilled but negotiations are ongoing with a number of airlines to take over the service.

Mr. Ambrose sought to provide clarity on the reasoning behind Ryanair's decision to withdraw from GBBCA. Ryanair had moved operations to GBBCA 3 years ago on the expectation of a certain timescale for a runway extension. However, the application process has since been considerably delayed beyond expected timescales (6-12 months) and in the meantime, Ryanair has been restricted to serving mainly domestic routes. The runway extension is necessary for Ryanair to be able to serve European routes because the fuel and passenger loads for these destinations dictate a longer take-off distance for their aircraft types. The ongoing delays with the planning process and uncertainty with regards to a deadline for a decision has frustrated Ryanair and for this reason they have made a rational business decision to move their operations to where they can better serve a range of destinations. That being said, the decision was made on good terms and if the runway extension was to go ahead, Ryanair would revert its operation to GBBCA.

Mr. Wright echoed this frustration by stating that a decision, whether for or against the application, would be welcomed at this point. He asked members if they would think it beneficial for the Forum Chairman to write to the DOE minister on their behalf. This was briefly discussed and views were mixed. It was concluded that it would probably not have much bearing on the timescale.

Mr. Hoey expressed his concern regarding the extent of 'misinformation' in the media in relation to the airport's operations and that East Belfast would be affected in terms of jobs if GBBCA was to close or be restricted further. Mr. Ambrose acknowledged this point and said that in many cases the facts aren't checked with the airport in advance of making press statements and that he is aware that individuals are employed to run a negative campaign against the airport.

Cllr. Mullaghan queried if the 20% drop in passenger numbers was due in part, to the economic downturn or a shift in passengers to other NI airports. Mr. Ambrose confirmed that the recent 30% swing from 10% growth to a 20% decline in passenger numbers vis-à-vis 2009 was due mainly to Ryanair's withdrawal from GBBCA.

Mr. Ambrose explained that Ryanair's withdrawal did have an impact on the financial performance of the business. The airport is working very hard to secure additional revenues and on a positive note, BMI load factors are at an all time high.

Mr. Doherty queried if passengers will be lost to Belfast International Airport as a result of Ryanair's withdrawal from GBBCA. Mr. Ambrose stated that this will not necessarily be the case and a certain percentage of the market in terms of visitor numbers and seat capacity is expected to be lost to Northern Ireland.

Mr. Hoey queried if GBBCA had considered trying to increase their share of the cargo market. Mr. Ambrose said that this was not really an option for GBBCA because cargo flights are generally noisier and heavier aircraft that tend to fly during night-time hours. Similarly, certain scheduled summer charter flights would conflict with the restrictions in GBBCA's hours of operation.

Mr. Crowe queried the contribution of General Aviation to the business. Mr. Ambrose confirmed that this was modest in terms of earnings.

4.2 Retail Development

- Autogrill's Harvest Market opened on 27th July 2010 with a revised food offering of local produce, with a pizza oven, wok station and salad bar.
- Three new retail units are to be opened in the departure lounge during the next quarter – one to be a WH Smith bookstore, the second to be an upmarket giftware concept and the third to be an additional food and beverage concept.

4.3 Capital Expenditure:

- Due to heightened security restrictions imposed by the CAA, GBBCA will be required to undergo further front-of-house changes. These changes will be introduced during the first quarter of 2011.
- The changes implemented as part of the terminal reconfiguration – the new departure lounge and central search area – have received very positive feedback from customers.

Mr. Wright queried if the current economic climate would impact on the work to be carried out at the front-of-house. Mr. Ambrose said that while the costs of this project could be significant, it is a security requirement and for this reason the airport would be proceeding with the investment.

Mr. Knatchbull queried if plans for a hotel on the GBBCA site are to go ahead. Mr. Ambrose advised members that planning permission had been secured for the project and the Airport is in discussions with a number of possible operators.

4.4 Operations:

- The two incidents of roof damage potentially as a result of wake vortices were investigated and a report was issued by the CAA. In summary, the report concluded that no anomalies had been identified. The data available indicated the aircraft were flying the correct flight path and were at the appropriate altitude. It was not possible to conclude the reason for the damaged roofs.

4.5 **Environmental:**

- GBBCA has been awarded Quintile 1 status in the BITC/Arena Network 2010 Environmental Benchmarking Survey. This survey looks at the environmental management practices and performance of approximately 250 NI private and public sector organisations. GBBCA has made a significant improvement on its 2009 Quintile 2 status, scoring 88% - 2% away from the prestigious 'Platinum' status achieved by just a handful of organisations.

4.6 **Community:**

- Approximately £34k has been spent year to date from the Community Fund on projects with a further £38k under consideration in the next quarter. A Community Fund committee has been established in GBBCA and projects are considered against formal qualification and selection criteria.

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 complaints 2009-2010

Mr. Ambrose drew members' attention to the fact that a number of post 21:30 movements took place on 29th October 2010 (8 in total) due to a number of operational and technical issues. Worth noting also was that there were zero delays after 23:00 in October 2010. Mr. Ambrose advised that 23:00 is considered the commencement of night-time hours by the industry.

Mr Ambrose advised members that on the request of the Planning Service, GBBCA are submitting a report with detailed commentary, beyond the standard delay codes, for each delayed movement after 21:30 for a period of 3 months commencing in November 2010.

Mr. Moore queried why there had been a significant increase in the number of noise complaints in 2010 compared with 2009. Ms. Duggan drew Forum members' attention to the total number of complainants compared with the total number of complaints highlighting that a large number of complaints had come from a small number of individuals. Mr. Ambrose advised members that the airport would not continue to respond on a complaint by complaint basis to individuals in some cases because it would be counterproductive to do so. Mr. Ambrose said that he would encourage individuals that have ongoing issues with the airport's operations to raise these with their community group or elected representative on the Forum to table for discussion.

Mr. Ambrose said that it was encouraging that the airport was not referenced at a recent session of Belfast Talks Back.

Mr. Knatchbull queried what fines are applied to flights after 21:30. Ms Duggan advised that it depended on the time band.

Post meeting note: *the agreed fining system for Community Fund purposes is as follows: flights after 21:30 hrs will be charged £50, after 22:00 hrs will be charged £100, after 22:30 hrs will be charged £300 and after 23:00 hrs will be charged and £600. The airport will also impose an additional £200 fine for each delayed flight in excess of 600 per annum. These charges are in addition to 'extension charges' levied on airlines.*

6. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

The Chairperson of the Environmental Sub Group, Mrs. Allen, gave a summary report to members on the points of interest and actions from the last Environmental Sub Group meeting on 4th October 2010:

- It was agreed that an invitation should be extended to the DOE Air and Environmental Quality Unit to send a representative to Forum and / or Environmental Sub Group meetings as their knowledge and role in the implementation of the Environmental Noise Directive would be beneficial.
- The group was given information on the UK's Airport Consultative Committees website (www.ukaccs.info).
- It was agreed that the proposal to introduce a web based flight tracking system utilising GBBCA's Noise & Track Monitoring System on the GBBCA website should not be pursued further at present due to the potential cost of this project (£30k approximately) and the uncertainty regarding the potential benefits of, and demand for, the facility.
- It was agreed that GBBCA append its current annual noise contour report with the following:
 - a section reporting compliance with the existing noise abatement procedures
 - information on noise complaints
 - compliance with the Chapter 3 standard
- Members agreed on the terms of reference for the sub group.
- Members discussed the advantages of supplying accurate factual information regarding environmental matters in the Community News.

Forum members requested that the Report from the Environmental Sub Group be circulated in advance of Forum meetings.

Action: Forum Secretary

7. AOB

The 2010 Noise Contour Report was circulated to Forum members. This report will be scrutinised at the Environmental Sub Group meeting in January 2011 and the outcomes of the meeting will be presented to members at the next Forum meeting.

Mr. Wright commented that it could be beneficial to have more representation from business interests at the Forum. It was agreed that Mr. Moore would make enquiries in relation to this.

Action: Mr. Moore

Capt. Ewer queried the timescale for decision on the runway extension planning application. Mr Ambrose said that the airport is completing a number of addendums to update the existing Environmental Statement for the proposal. These will be submitted to Planning Service in the next week of two and their publication will be advertised in local media. Following this, a decision will be made as to whether to approve or decline the application or proceed with a Public Inquiry. If a Public Inquiry is to go ahead, then it is possible that this will take place around June 2011 and take a period of three months to conclude. In summary, the whole process could be completed by third quarter 2011.

8. DATE FOR 2011 MEETINGS

Proposed dates:

- o Wednesday 23rd February 2011
- o Wednesday 22nd June 2011
- o Wednesday 16th November 2011

Signed: 
ALAN CROWE
Chairman

Date: 23rd February 2011

AC/ld