

GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM

Minutes of Meeting No.60

Held on Wednesday, 31 March 2010 in Conference Room 1 at 7.00pm

Present:	Mr. Alan Crowe	Chairman
	Mr. Alan Walker	Vice Chairman
	Mr. Brian Ambrose	George Best Belfast City Airport
	Mr. Gordon Wright	Hollywood Residents' Association
	Mr. Patrick Knatchbull	Cultra Residents' Association
	Mr. John Prifti	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
	Mr. John McNair	Marmont & District Community Association
	Mr. David McConnell	Inverary Community Centre Committee
	Mr. Terry Hoey	Palmerston Residents Association
	Cllr. Cathal Mullaghan	Belfast City Council
	Mr. Robin Newton	Belfast City Council
	Mrs. Lisa Toland	Belfast City Council
	Mrs. Siobhan Toland	Belfast City Council
	Alderman Leslie Cree	North Down Borough Council
	Mr. Sean Coulter	Department for Regional Development
	Mr. Andy McClenaghan	Northern Ireland Consumer Council
In attendance:	Ms. Laura Duggan	George Best Belfast City Airport

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from:

Mr. John Moore	Belfast Chamber of Commerce
Capt. Ian Ewer	Base Captain Bmi

2. WELCOME TO NEW COMMUNITY GROUP REPRESENTATIVES

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting, in particular new community group members; Mr. Terry Hoey representing Palmerston Residents Association; Mr. John McNair representing Marmont and District Community Association; and Mr. David McConnell representing Inverary Community Centre Committee.

3. INTRODUCTION TO THE FORUM & TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman gave a brief introduction to the background and purpose of the Forum for new members. In 1993, Belfast City Airport set up as a voluntary measure the Airport Forum following guidance from the Department for Transport (DfT) in Great Britain, to consider matters

concerning the operation of the Airport that impact on the environment and local community. The Chairman stressed that with respect to the Forum the term 'community' refers not just local residents but all those bodies which are impacted upon by the airport's operations including local and regional business and tourism groups.

The Chairman advised that a review of the Forum including its constitution was undertaken after new guidelines specific to airport consultative committees in Northern Ireland were issued by the Department for Regional Development. This process was completed in 2008.

The purpose of the Forum, according to the Chairman, is to enable the airport to exchange information and ideas with those bodies which have an interest in matters concerning the airport and to allow the views of interested parties to be raised and taken into account by the airport. However, the Forum should not detract from or constrain the responsibility of the airport operator to manage the airport.

The Chairman advised new members that the Forum is not a decision making body, and as such, voting on the matters discussed will not normally take place. Discussions will normally conclude with the Forum reaching a consensus view or recording differences of opinion. Where a vote is taken, each Member representative shall have one vote. Observers and those 'In Attendance' shall not be eligible to vote.

The Chairman requested that Members communicate the discussions of the Forum to the bodies they represent, except where the Forum agrees that discussions are in confidence.

Mr. Ambrose concluded on this item by saying that he hoped the Forum would become more effective going forward and that he welcomes input from around the table and any feedback and constructive criticism will be taken on board and considered by the Airport. He advised, however, that the effectiveness of the Forum could be undermined if a single issue dominates the discussion.

4. MINUTES OF THE FORUM MEETING HELD ON 18 NOVEMBER 2009

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

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 Minutes from the Health Impact Assessment workshop held on 19 October were circulated by Ms. Duggan on 18th January 2010.

5.2 The Environmental Sub Group met on 19th January 2010 to consider the 2009 Noise Contour Report. A report from this meeting will be given by the Sub Group Chairperson later in the meeting.

- 5.3 Ms. Duggan circulated induction packs to new Forum members as agreed at the last Forum meeting.
- 5.4 The Chairman sought to clarify the structure of the penalty system for the Community Fund for Forum members. Penalties are imposed on airlines for extensions after 21:30hrs on a sliding scale based on time bands. Fining commences from 21:45 hrs, however, to allow the airlines 15 minutes grace.

Post meeting fact: contributions to the Community Fund are made for all arriving and departing flights after 21:30 hrs.

Mr. Ambrose added to this by explaining that the Airport already imposes substantial penalties on airlines requesting extensions to reflect the cost to the Airport of remaining open after 21:30 hrs. Over and above this are the penalties imposed on airlines for the purposes of the Community Fund recommended by the EiP. As the Community Fund post-dates some of the contracts with its airlines the Airport in fact pays the majority of these penalties. This will be addressed, however in any new contracts with its airlines, in future.

Mr. Ambrose concluded that the Fund is making a meaningful contribution with £26,500 having been allocated to date and a positive balance of £33,000 yet to be distributed.

- 5.5 The Chairman summarised the process of recruitment that took place for new community group members. The amendments to the Forum Community Representation Paper proposed at the last Forum meeting were made and the paper was ratified by the Forum. Following this, an application form and background note (including selection criteria) was sent to existing community groups and interested parties in mid January. In conjunction with this, a notice was placed in the Airport's Community Newsletter and on the BCA website and a press release was issued to the media with the aim of reaching as many potential applicants as possible.

The Chairman advised the Forum that following the 26th February deadline, a panel was convened on 3rd March to judge the applications comprising the Chairman, the Vice Chairman, Cllr. Robin Newton, Alderman Leslie Cree and Mr. John Moore. After considerable deliberation, taking into account the information supplied by the applicants and the agreed selection criteria the panel agreed the following:

- Of the five applications received from North Down community groups, Hollywood Residents Association, Helen's Bay and Crawfordsburn Residents' Association and the Cultra Residents' Association were selected to fill the three North Down seats on the grounds of greater representation. Given that the remaining groups, Hollywood Airport Action Group (Formerly Kinnegar Residents' Association) and Seahill Residents' Association, met the selection criteria, they were advised in writing by the

Forum Secretary to liaise with the successful North Down applicants about the possibility of being represented on the Forum by one of these groups.

- All three applicants from East Belfast – Palmerston Residents' Association, Marmont Road and District Community Association and Inverary Community Centre Committee – met the selection criteria and as such each group was allocated a seat on the Forum thus filling the number of seats available for East Belfast. It was agreed by the panel to seek clarification regarding the Inverary Community Centre Committee's nominated representative and it was confirmed by Inverary that this would be Mr. McConnell.

The Chairman advised the Forum that no applications were received from South Belfast community groups prior to the deadline. The Chairman of Park Road & District Residents' Association, Mr. McNamee had sent correspondence to Ms. Duggan to advise that they would not be submitting an application on the grounds that they felt that they did not meet the selection criteria. On consideration of the information supplied in this correspondence it was agreed by the Chairman and Ms. Duggan that the group would if fact meet most of the criteria and as such, Ms. Duggan reverted to Mr. McNamee to encourage Park Road & District to submit an application. An application was received some weeks later but after the Panel meeting to review applications was convened. As such, another meeting of the panel will have to be arranged to consider this application in line with the selection procedure. The Chairman requested the cooperation of the panel members in this regard.

Action: Panel members

Mr. Wright wished to commend the Airport for the extent of the publicity with regards to the recruitment process for new community group members.

- 5.6 Mr. Ambrose said that in line with the Airport's commitment to public reporting regarding Forum matters, the Airport will endeavour to place the minutes from this meeting and future Forum meetings on the Airport's website. The Forum members welcomed this decision.

Action: Ms. Duggan

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT

- 6.1 Airport Performance:** the aviation industry is in decline in general affecting most UK airports. However, Belfast City Airport managed to see a 1% growth in passenger numbers in 2009.
- Passenger growth is projected to continue in 2010
 - Growth in Air Transport Movements (ATMs) is expected from 39,000 in 2009 to a forecasted 43,000 in 2010 mirroring 2008 performance.

- **6.2 Capital Investment:** The terminal reconfiguration is almost complete. The new enhanced departure lounge is now open and it is doing well with revenues up 20-25%. Costa Coffee is to move imminently to a new location to the front of the main concourse and will be two-tiered. The airside restaurant is to undergo further development in the summer with the introduction of self-service station and pizza oven offering. The Airport has invested approximately £6 million in the reconfiguration project.

Mr. Ambrose extended an invitation to Forum members to the Airport for a tour of the new facilities. Requests should be made through the Forum Secretary.

Action: Forum Members

- 6.3 Runway Extension:** The Minister for the Environment, Edwin Poots M.L.A. has called for a public inquiry into the runway extension planning application. Mr. Ambrose gave Forum members an outline of the public inquiry process.

- 6.4 Winter Operations:** The airport faced a challenging winter of prolonged sub zero temperatures for approximately two months. Fortunately, Belfast City Airport was less affected than other UK airports but it was still not without its incidents. One particular 'high profile' incident to note was when the former head of the Assets Recovery Agency, Mr. McQuillan described the Airport facilities as "third world" after he witnessed an airline engineer of his Bmi flight manually removing snow off the aircraft wings when the de-icing machine ran out of fluid. Mr. Ambrose said that on review, the company should have heated more de-icing fluid. That being said, the manual removal of snow and ice is a recognised practice. Mr. Ambrose assured the Forum that safety was not compromised by this action and it significantly shortened the potential delay experienced by those passengers by avoiding the time it would have taken to heat up more de-icing fluid.

- 6.5 CSR:** the balance currently sits at approximately £43,000. Examples of projects supported include: Priory College's Haiti appeal (£5,000) and Martin Lynch's drama 'Dancing Shoes' (£10,000). A document will be circulated with the meeting minutes detailing revenues and expenditures for the Community Fund.

Action: Ms. Duggan

Mr. Ambrose once again welcomed suggestions from Forum members of suitable projects that could be supported by the Community Fund.

Action: Forum Members

Mr. Hoey queried if the Community Fund could support the operation of a bus from Sydenham rail station to the Airport via IKEA and Tesco at Knocknagoney. Mr. Ambrose advised Mr. Hoey that the Airport operates a courtesy bus service to / from Sydenham

rail halt but that the service is used sporadically. Mr. Ambrose said that the Community Fund is not intended to support normal airport operations such as a bus service. Furthermore, there is an issue also with Sydenham rail halt in terms of accessibility for People with Reduced Mobility although Translink is to commence work shortly to rectify this.

The Airport has met on a number of occasions with Translink regarding the establishment of a rail halt opposite the Airport but that current patronage cannot justify the investment. Translink are of the view that the Airport is adequately served by public transport in the form of the 600 Airport bus service. Translink have recently increased the frequency of this service to every 20 minutes at peak times.

6.6 Route Development:

- Easyjet commenced operations at Belfast City Airport on 7th January 2010 with a twice daily service to London Luton.
- Flybe is to commence a new route to Humberside approximately 4 times per week from 27th May 2010.

Mr. Wright commended the Airport for its Community Newsletter publication, particularly the 'Facts Block' section as a means to dispel myths about the Airport's operations. Mr. Wright said that Community News should be actively used to publicise the Airport's Community initiatives. Mr. Wright queried the circulation of the Community News. Mr. Ambrose said that he wasn't sure of the exact number of households it is delivered to but will find this out and revert to the Forum.

Action: Mr. Ambrose

Post meeting fact: Approximately 17,000 copies of the Community Newsletter are circulated to households in East Belfast and North Down.

6.7 Other Issues:

Mr. Walker queried how the new security arrangements are affecting operations. Mr. Ambrose responded by saying that the security checking area referred to as 'Central Search' has been relocated and enhanced with some new equipment and a greater preparation area. The new facility has halved queuing times on average and the feedback received to date has been generally positive. However, Mr. Ambrose admitted that the Airport is still experiencing some bottlenecks with the system that need to be resolved.

Mr. Ambrose also advised the Forum of the re-tendering that is currently underway for a security provider and made note of the balance that has to be achieved between compliance and customer service.

Mr. Ambrose also referred to the concern over safety in the media with respect to the new 'front-of-house' security arrangements. He said that the new pick-up/drop-off arrangements were mandated by Government following the incident at Glasgow Airport. The Airport has worked for two years in conjunction with the PSNI and DfT to develop the new layout and invested £750,000 in this project which has included anti-ram bollards and other non-disclosed security measures.

Mr. Walker queried if the Airport could provide an update on the welfare of a girl who was taken off an outbound Bmi flight to London Heathrow on 30th March. Mr. Ambrose said that he would investigate and respond to Mr. Walker directly.

Action: Mr. Ambrose

Alderman Leslie Cree wished to highlight that he had difficulty on a number of occasions getting a park in the long-stay car park and the absence of the courtesy bus. Mr. Ambrose advised Alderman Cree that the courtesy bus does a continuous loop between the long-stay car park and the main terminal building but on occasion it will be directed to the Sydenham rail halt on request. That being said, the bus service can tend to be a bit erratic as it stops at various places on the route to pick up / drop off individual passengers. For this reason the Airport is investigating the feasibility of extending the covered walkway out to the long-stay car park.

Alderman Cree also wished to note the problems he has experienced recently with the car park pay stations. Mr. Ambrose responded by saying that these problems were due to the fact that pay stations are over ten years old but that there are plans to replace them in the near future.

Post meeting fact: All car park equipment has been replaced as of 16th April 2010.

7. 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
- Belfast Lough bias
- Analysis of movements post 23:00 hrs local
- Movements by aircraft type
- Analysis of noise related complaints 2009-2010

Mr. Ambrose drew to the Forum's attention to the exceptional aircraft movement at 00:01 hrs on 22nd December 2010. Weather conditions on the 21st December were particularly severe causing major disruptions to operations at the Belfast City Airport and at the majority of the UK airports and further afield.

In relation to noise complaints, Mr. McNair made the point that the downward trend in noise complaints received does not necessarily indicate that people are less concerned with the Airport's operations. It might be the case that people are not bothering to contact the Airport.

Mr. McNair noted that air quality is a concern for local residents as there is often a distinct smell of kerosene in vicinity of the Airport. Mr. McConnell seconded this concern saying that Inverary residents are also affected. Mr. Ambrose said that he can appreciate that aviation fumes can be unpleasant but that they are not harmful to human health as was verified by independent tests. Furthermore, Mr. Ambrose stated that aircraft do not dump fuel at or on approach to the Airport.

Mr. McConnell queried what the Airport's procedure is for handling noise complaints. Mr. Ambrose advised Forum members that complaints can be lodged with the Airport either in writing, on the BCA website, or through the dedicated noise hotline number. All complaints are logged and are responded to, provided adequate contact details are supplied by the complainant.

Mr. McConnell queried if the Sydenham Partnership youth group could avail of the tour of the Airport. Mr. Ambrose confirmed that this should be possible and would welcome similar requests.

Mr. McClenaghan queried if the seats for sale limit of 2 million passengers from the Airport has been exceeded. Mr. Ambrose gave some background context on the seats for sale limit by saying that the measure was put in place due to the constraints of the old Airport terminal building. It was considered as part of the EiP and was noted as being an 'inappropriate' measure. The EiP recommended that the measure be reconsidered provided an improved noise management system, including a Noise Track and Monitoring System (NTMS) was put in place. The Airport has complied with these conditions and as such Mr. Ambrose advised the Forum that he has written to The Minister for the Environment (on 5th October 2009) requesting for the seats for sale limit to be reviewed. Mr. Ambrose has since received a holding response but no decision has been made to date. Mr. Ambrose advised the Forum that the Airport has placed a hold on reporting data on 'seats for sale' until a decision has been made on this matter.

Cllr. Mullaghan noted that there has been a change in the aircraft types in January and February of this year and queried the reason for this. Mr. Ambrose said that the Airport will investigate and report back to the Forum.

Action: Ms. Duggan

The Forum noted the content of the Forum reports.

8. REPORT FROM THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUB GROUP

8.1 END Noise Action Plans

Mrs. Toland gave an update on the Environmental Noise Directive Noise Action Plans. The Airport has submitted a draft Noise Action Plan to the DoE but that it is still being considered. The DoE is awaiting a decision from the Planning Service on the ongoing matter of the Indicative Noise Contours.

8.2 Noise Contour Report 2009

Mrs. Toland advised the Forum that the Environmental Sub Group met on the 19th January 2010 to consider the Noise Contour Report for 2009. Mrs. Toland welcomed the technical input from Mr. Mark Beattie and Mr. Ray Hooke at the meeting. The following was noted:

- The Sub Group welcomed the use of nine months of actual noise data from the Noise Track and Monitoring System (NTMS) in the calculation of noise contours.
- It was noted that the Integrated Noise Model (INM) version has been updated and adjustment has been applied so that the 2008 figures are modified to the new INM version settings. This makes comparison not directly possible with the 2008 report.
- The Sub Group noted the significant change in the mix of aircraft types over the last number of years, for example with Boeing 737-800.
- The Sub Group would consider the reporting of trends year and year useful
- It was noted that there have been increases on 2008 values for the percentage of population exposed under the 54, 57 and 60 L_{Aeq} noise contours.
- The group note that the shapes of the Daytime Noise Contours have changed from 2008 to 2009. They are longer and wider to the city side over the populated areas of Sydenham and Ballymacarrett.
- The Sub Group recommends the adoption of the 2009 Noise Contour Report by the Forum but that given the Group are not technical experts in noise modelling, it would welcome feedback from competent authorities such as DRD and DoE in terms of a formal evaluation of the report, including the approach to validation and the assumptions made.

It was requested that the minutes from the Environmental Sub Group be circulated to Forum members.

Action: Ms. Duggan

It was agreed by Forum members to adopt the 2009 Noise Contour Report.

8.3 Noise Track and Monitoring System Demonstration

Mrs. Toland advised Forum members that the Environmental Sub Group had been invited to the Airport for a demonstration of the Noise Track and Monitoring System (NTMS). The demonstration took place on 9th March 2010 and was attended by the Forum Chairman, Mrs. Toland and Ms. Allen from Belfast City Council's Environmental Health department. The purpose of the demonstration was to get a greater insight into the capability of the NTMS with the aim of establishing next steps for its utilisation and for determining what type of reports to extract from it.

Mrs. Toland explained to the Forum that it is possible to see from the NTMS the track of every aircraft movement and that the colour of the track will change depending on the aircraft height. It is possible therefore to utilise the NTMS to query if noise abatement procedures have been followed. It is also possible to use the NTMS to investigate individual noise complaints.

Mrs. Toland noted that given the abundance of information that is available from the NTMS, further discussion will need to be had by the Environmental Sub Group about what information would be appropriate and meaningful to extract from the system for reporting purposes.

The Chairman advised Forum members that as a first step the Airport will look into the feasibility of using the NTMS to report to the Forum on infringements with respect to noise abatement procedures. In addition, the Chairman informed the Forum that he has made contact with the liaison group for Airport Consultative Committees to determine what information other consultative committees seek from their NTMS and how they utilise this information which could act as a guide for Forum going forward. The Chairman is still waiting for responses from other airports on this query.

8.4 Validation of the Noise Contour Reports

Mrs. Toland stated that in light of the CAA Report regarding the Noise Contour Reports, Belfast City Council would welcome a validation exercise to be carried out by the DoE. Mr. Ambrose stated that Bickerdike Allen Partners were selected independently to create its Noise Contour Report. If DoE wish to conduct a validation exercise, the airport has no objections.

Mr. Hoey commented on the lack of information out in the public domain regarding the positive work being carried out by the Airport such as the establishment of the NTMS. Mr. Ambrose made the point that sometimes positive work can be overshadowed by more sensational news stories. Mr. Ambrose said that he would see the Forum as a means through which to communicate what the airport is doing to the local community.

9. SUB GROUP RE-ESTABLISHMENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Chairman gave some background to the history and purpose of the Forum Sub Groups and an information document on Sub Group terms of reference was circulated. Currently there are two Sub Groups in existence:

- Environmental
- Economic and Services Development

The Chairman proposed the reconstitution of these Sub Groups which was agreed by Forum Members. It was agreed that Mrs. Toland would continue to act as the Chairperson of the Environmental Sub Group. The Chairperson for the Economic and Services Development will need to be decided and the Chairman welcomed nominations for this position.

Mr. Crowe requested that Forum members declare their preference(s) for membership of these Sub Groups. Ms. Duggan is to circulate a pro forma to Members for this purpose.

Action: Ms. Duggan


10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Prifti raised the issue of serious queues in the short-stay car park, on Monday 29th March. Mr Ambrose said he would investigate this matter further.

Action: Mr. Ambrose

11. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Airport Forum will be held on Wednesday 23rd June at 19:00 hrs in the Airport Conference Centre.

Signed: 
ALAN CROWE
Chairman

Date: 23rd June 2010

AC/ld