

**GEORGE BEST BELFAST CITY AIRPORT FORUM**  
**Minutes of Meeting No 92**  
**Held on Tuesday 22 June 2021 at 7.00pm**  
**VENUE: Online via Zoom**

**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
Ms Hannah Brown	Consumer Council Northern Ireland
Mr David Courtenay	Department for Infrastructure
Mr Alastair Curran	Belfast City Council
Mr Mark Doherty	Belfast Harbour Commissioners
Mr Raymond McNair	George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA)
Mr Richard Williams	Consumer Council Northern Ireland

**In attendance:**

Ian Nuttall	Forum Secretary
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**1. APOLOGIES, WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS**

**Apologies:**

Ms Karen Boutros	Helen's Bay & Crawfordsburn Residents' Association
Mrs Dot Erskine	Tourism Northern Ireland
Cllr Gillian Greer	Ards and North Down Borough Council
Alderman Tom Haire	Belfast City Council

Mr Walker welcomed Ms Brown to the Forum as a new member of staff within the Transport Team at the Consumer Council.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

Members agreed that the minutes represented an accurate record of the meeting held on 30 March 2021.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

None.

**4. AIRPORT DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Mr McNair provided an overview and update on the recent situation at GBBCA. Key points covered included –

- A gradual increase in passenger numbers in recent months
- The recent cessation of trading by Stobart Air (operating Aer Lingus Regional services from GBBCA) and the subsequent efforts to 'backfill' the affected routes – all of which apart from Leeds Bradford have now been picked up by British Airways and Aer Lingus (Mainline)
- New routes now operating/due to operate under British Airways (Glasgow and Newquay) and Easyjet (London Gatwick)
- Safety and hygiene measures in place at GBBCA with respect to Covid-19 including enhanced cleaning regime
- Passenger Covid-19 testing facilities now operating within the Terminal in partnership with Randox.

Mr Walker invited questions from the group.

Mr Andrews asked Mr McNair about the impact of financial losses (due to the pandemic) on capital spend. Mr McNair replied that during this period of low revenues, all capital expenditure is restricted to minimal spend to address safety issues only and that the business is being supplemented by additional bank loans for operating day to day expenses.

Mr Williams asked Mr McNair about the Airport's plans should business recovery take longer than expected. Mr McNair indicated that whilst further lending would not be ruled out as a last resort, he was hopeful that GBBCA would benefit from a new fund to be introduced by the Department for the Economy aimed at enhancing air connectivity with the rest of the UK.

Mr Walker asked what the impact would be of a delay to countries being put on the pandemic 'green list' as travel destinations. Mr McNair replied that smaller airlines flying international routes may be those most likely to be affected.

Mr Walker stated that the work done in quickly recovering the lost Stobart Air/Aer Lingus Regional service whilst at the same time bringing in new routes with Easy Jet and British Airways was a credit to GBBCA – to which those present agreed.

## **2. AIRPORT STATISTICS**

Mr Walker highlighted the contents of the statistics report produced for this meeting, which included comparison of data for 2019, 2020 and 2021 (to date) across the following measures: total ATMs, ATMs by route, ATMs post-21:30, noise concerns, passenger numbers, flights over Belfast Lough, and current operating routes.

As an observation, Mrs Edwards suggested that further noise concerns should be expected as air traffic increases in contrast with the recent extended period of low flight numbers. Mr Walker suggested that GBBCA should keep in mind that areas of new housing in East Belfast which have been developed during the recent quiet period may be a potential future source of noise concerns.

Mr Williams asked if the statistics presented were available for use by the Consumer Council. Mr Nuttall explained that whilst a number of statistics are generally available some may only be made public following publication of the Airport's Annual Performance Report to the Department for Infrastructure. It was agreed that consideration would be given to which data are available for use throughout the year, for discussion at the November Forum meeting. In the meantime, it was agreed that Mr Williams could address any queries regarding availability and use of specific data to Mr Nuttall.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

### **3. CHANGE OF GBBCA CEO**

Mr Walker asked Mr McNair to update the Forum on the forthcoming change of leadership at GBBCA. Mr McNair explained that Mr Ambrose would be retiring as CEO at the end of June and that his replacement Matthew Hall would be joining as the new CEO on 1 August. Members agreed to Mr Walker's suggestion that Mr Hall should be invited to attend the November Forum meeting once a date has been confirmed.

Mr Walker pointed to the high regard in which Mr Ambrose has been held during his long career with GBBCA; those present agreed with Mr Walker's suggestion that he should write to Mr Ambrose to express the Forum's gratitude and congratulations on his retirement.

**Action:** Forum Secretary; Forum Chair

### **4. ENVIRONMENTAL SUB-GROUP REPORT (ESG CHAIR)**

The minutes from the Environmental Sub-Group meeting on 8 June circulated with the Forum papers, were noted by Members.

Mrs Allen gave an overview of the main areas covered in the ESG including presentations on GBBCA's recent environmental performance and the development of Belfast City Council's Draft Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026, and a summary of ICCAN's recent presentation to the UK ACCs. Mr Nuttall agreed to circulate the latter to the group.

Mrs Allen asked Mr Nuttall if he had contacted the Reserve Forces and Cadets Association with a view to using its facility as a possible new location for the Kinnegar Noise Monitoring Terminal, as suggested by Alderman Keery at the ESG meeting. Mr Nuttall replied that he would be following up on the suggestion subject to the outcome of test monitoring currently being conducted at Holywood Wastewater Pumping Station as another potential site for relocation.

Mrs Allen told Members that she would shortly be retiring from Belfast City Council and that this would be her last meeting. Mr Walker thanked Mrs Allen, on behalf of the Forum, for her service both as a Forum Member and as Chair of the ESG, indicating that she will be greatly missed.

**Action:** Forum Secretary

### **5. ARRANGEMENTS FOR RE-RECRUITMENT OF COMMUNITY GROUPS**

Mr Walker told Members that the process to re-recruit community groups to the Forum (which had been delayed due to the pandemic) was to re-commence, pointing out that this was no reflection on the value of the current members but a matter of good governance given that the process last took place 12 years ago. He indicated that the application process would open within the coming two weeks, with an expected closing date of the end of August - with a view to completion ahead of a November Forum meeting. As part of the process Mr Walker noted that, due to recent limitations on meetings posed by the pandemic, applicants would only be required to provide example AGM minutes etc for their organisations from within the past two years (rather than one year).

Mr Walker encouraged the current Forum community groups to apply to re-join (and to encourage other groups to apply).

Mr Walker suggested that, with recent and potential future changes in personnel within the Forum, it might be useful following the re-recruitment process to invite an appropriate noise expert as guest to explain some of the technical aspects of aircraft noise measurement and management.

**Action:** Forum Secretary; Forum Chair; Forum Deputy Chair

## **7. ARRANGEMENTS FOR APPOINTMENT OF NEW CHAIR**

Mrs Edwards agreed to leave the meeting during this agenda item.

Mr Walker told Members that Mrs Edwards was willing to be considered for the position of Chair. He suggested that, if acceptable to Members, he would seek proposers for Mrs Edwards and a vote would be taken at the November meeting on Mrs Edwards moving from Deputy Chair to Chair. If this suggestion were not acceptable, nominations would be sought from Members to which Mrs Edwards name would be added. Members were asked to vote for Mr Walkers' suggestion, which was carried unanimously.

It was agreed that, should members vote in November for Mrs Edwards moving to Chair then she would do so immediately and take forward the process for appointment of a new Deputy Chair. Should Members vote against Mrs Edwards moving to Chair, then further nominations for potential candidates would be sought for consideration through a process which would be led by Mrs Edwards as Deputy Chair.

Mr Andrews asked if there were any specific rules regarding appointment of a new Chair. Mr Walker indicated that requirements are set out in the Forum's constitution, with which the above course of action would comply. He also said that, if required, guidance would be sought from GBBCA's Personnel Department to ensure processes are in line with relevant regulatory requirements.

**Action:** Forum Secretary; Forum Chair

## **3. AOB**

None.

## **4. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

November 2021, date to be confirmed.

Signed:



Date: 28 June 2021

Alan Walker (Forum Chair) AW/in