

**ANNUAL MEETING – LIAISON GROUP OF UK AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES**

**NOTE OF THE 34<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 3<sup>RD</sup> JUNE 2010 AT LONDON CITY AIRPORT**

Present:	Aberdeen	-	Dr. Peter Smart
	Belfast City	-	Mr. Alan Crowe
	Birmingham	-	Mr. Viv Astling
	Bournemouth	-	Mr. Peter Thorne Ms. Ruth Osborn
	Bristol	-	Mr. Peter Lacey Mrs. Margaret Thornton
	Cardiff	-	Ms. Jocelyn Barton
	Durham Tees Valley	-	Mr. David Lyonette Mr. David Cosgrove
	East Midlands	-	Mr. Barrie Whyman
	Edinburgh	-	Mr. Alastair O'Neil Mr. Tom Wright
	Gatwick	-	Mr. Neil Maltby Mrs. Paula Street
	Glasgow	-	Mr. John Richmond
	Heathrow	-	Mr. Sam Jones Mr. Philip Carlisle Mrs Carole Havercroft
	Inverness	-	Mrs. Pat Hayden
	Leeds - Bradford	-	Mr. Michael Goodwin
	Liverpool John Lennon	-	Mr. Denis Knowles Mr. Mike Jones
	London City	-	Mr. John Adshead Mr. Stuart Innes
	Luton	-	Mr. Martin Routledge
	Manchester	-	Mr. Steve Wilkinson Mr. Mike Flynn
	Newcastle	-	Mrs. Dorothy Craig Mr. John Scott
	Prestwick	-	Mr. Nigel Wallace
	Southampton	-	Mr. Tony Balcombe Mr. Richard Ward

Stansted	-	Mr. Stewart Ashurst Mr. Graham Redgwell
Conference Secretary	-	Mr. Barry Smith
Department for Transport	-	Mr. Frank Evans Mr. Roy Strapp

Observers:

London Heliport	-	Mr. Roger Bird
	-	Mr. Colin Stanbury
AUC	-	Mr. Simon Evans

## **NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

1. The notes of the last meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009 were received and noted.

## **UK AVIATION UPDATE**

2. Delegates noted the paper summarising current UK activity in respect of aviation matters.

### **The New Coalition Government**

3. Delegates were updated on the new Government, the content of its coalition document issued on 12th May, and its current programme and policy priorities in respect of aviation matters.

4. Delegates noted the early stance taken by the new Government on the cancellation of plans for new runways at the London airports and the abolition of the *Infrastructure Planning Commission IPC*. In particular delegates noted that apart from the South East expansion policy the existing 2003 Air Transport White Paper - The Future of Air Transport would remain in place until replaced by a new policy. There was concern that there was now an absence of a clear strategic policy framework to guide airports and local planning authorities on future major airport development. Delegates felt it was important therefore that the new Minister for Aviation should be urged to review of the Air Transport White Paper in light of the decision not to build new runways at the London airports and to suggest that a high level statement of aviation policy be produced at the earliest possible time to provide a strategic framework.

### **Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)**

5. Delegates commented on the abolition of the IPC and noted that the Government still planned a fast tracking of planning inquiries for major infrastructure projects. Delegates gave some practical examples of planning issues involving their airport but it was unclear how inquiries into the major infrastructure planning applications would be undertaken.

6. Barry Smith reported that the Government had proposed a Major Infrastructure Planning Unit to sit alongside the Planning Inspectorate and that Ministers would take decisions on applications within the same statutory fast-track timeframe as the IPC regime. Whilst delegates had no particular views about the abolition of the IPC, all member committees were keen to ensure that in working through the detail of the changes the Government considered carefully how best to organise public inquiries into major planning applications. In particular delegates were concerned that such applications might continue to be subject to the lengthy and extremely expensive adversarial type of public inquiry. It was agreed therefore that UKACCs should write to the Government seeking a steer on the new process and to advocate the strong support among members for a more inquisitorial rather than adversarial approach. It was also agreed that the paper prepared by John Adshead a few years ago, which still remained relevant, on the need for inquisitorial inquiries should be updated and submitted to the Government for consideration.

### **Satellite Based Approaches**

7. Delegates noted the position at Manchester in the delay in implementing a new satellite based approach system. Manchester Airport had invested in the new equipment/technology but was not able to introduce the new system due to an approvals delay by the CAA. Delegates recognised that satellite-based approaches of this kind represented a very important new approach to the handling of aircraft landing at the UK's airports not least because it offered more scope for helping to mitigate the noise and other environmental impacts of aircraft in the landing phase. It was noted that discussions continued between the CAA and NATS about the detailed scope of the safety assurance documentation but no timescale had yet been given as to when the new system at Manchester could be implemented. It was agreed that on behalf of UKACCs the Secretariat would write to the CAA seeking clarification of the issues to be addressed and a likely timescale for the implementation of the new system at Manchester.

### **ANASE**

8. Delegates noted that the ANASE report (the study into attitudes to noise from aircraft sources in England) published in 2007 would not be used to inform future policy. The DfT and the CAA were considering the scope for more research work. The *Noise Action Plans* produced pursuant to the *Environmental Noise Directive* would provide feedback on local issues. The range of noise measurement criteria available was also being reviewed. Delegates believed that good communications with local residents and asking the 'right' questions in surveys would be important if new studies were to reveal a more reliable view.

### **PRESERVATION OF SLOTS FOR DOMESTIC SERVICES AT LONDON AIRPORTS**

9. Delegates considered a paper providing an update on the decline in the number of regions served at London airports. Mrs. Street reported that in its response, the DfT had advised that a study had been commissioned by the (former) Government to gather further evidence on the value of regional access to the London airports. It was noted that the study would analyse the potential economic and social benefits for the UK regions of enhanced access to Heathrow and would weigh those against the negative impacts on the air transport industry, and the environmental drawbacks of increased short-haul flights. Mr. Evans said he would keep the Group informed as to whether the new Government intended to take this study forward.

10. Dr. Smart reported on the recent letter his Committee had sent to the Secretary of State for Transport highlighting the vital need to ensure the further regions of the UK had excellent connectivity to and through Heathrow, and that a mechanism needed to be found to enable connectivity to be ensured on an enduring basis within the constraints that the new Government had placed on the expansion of Heathrow. A copy of the letter had been circulated to delegates. The meeting fully endorsed the content of the letter.

11. Member committees strongly believed that there was not only a need to maintain point-to-point domestic air services but also to ensure that passengers could connect with international air services within the UK. Regional airports were increasingly reliant on international hubs outside the UK to gain access to the wider world. It was commented that Heathrow was the UK's main global gateway but fewer and fewer regional airports were able to maintain access to it. Whilst the restrictions arising from European legislation and competition law were acknowledged, delegates felt that there were very few incentives for airlines to continue to operate domestic services particularly if the slots they held at a London airport could be used more profitably to serve foreign destinations using larger jets.

12. Consideration was given to the impact on domestic services arising from the new Government's decision to abandon plans for a third runway at Heathrow. Delegates were most concerned that without the provision of additional capacity at Heathrow it would lead to a worsening situation for regional services. The proposals for a High Speed Rail network were noted but delegates felt that this was a long-term plan and would not in any event provide a viable alternative for airports such as Belfast City, Aberdeen and Inverness. It was agreed therefore that UKACCS would write to the new Minister to highlight member

committees' concerns and to urge the new Government to find an imaginative alternative mechanism to preserve slots for regional services at London airports (Heathrow mainly) to serve the far regions of the UK where public transport did not provide a suitable, viable alternative.

### **IMPROVING SURFACE ACCESS TO AIRPORTS**

13. Delegates noted the Secretariat's paper which provided background information on the responsibility of airport operators to bring forward proposals to upgrade or enhance the surface access transport network to support airport growth. Members also noted the potential impact of the Government's proposed budget cuts. The meeting also received reports from member committees on surface access arrangements at their airports and the achievement of modal split targets.

14. In respect of rail transport, some committees were concerned about the implications of the Government's budget cuts on surface access schemes to airports such as Gatwick Station and the Glasgow rail link; the funding for the latter scheme had already been withdrawn. Delegates also noted with concern that there might be implications for the purchase of new rolling stock, particularly as the standard of some existing stock was very poor.

15. It was also felt that there was a need for better links between the London airports and the importance of the High Speed Rail network having a station at Heathrow. It was noted that no decision had yet been made on whether Heathrow was to have a direct link to the high speed rail network but a study into the business case for such a link was being undertaken. Delegates also commented on the problems where trains serving airports had to share tracks with commuter services.

### **REVIEW OF THE FRAMEWORK FOR THE REGULATION OF AIRPORTS**

16. Delegates considered a paper summarising the current position in respect of the reforms for the framework for the economic regulation of UK airports. Delegates noted that the *Airports Charges Directive (ACD)* would come into effect on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at airports across Europe handling more than 5 million passengers per annum. It was also noted that the former Government had confirmed its proposal for an airport licensing regime with Tier 1 and Tier 2 airport licences (Tier 2 licences would be for airports with more than 5 million passengers per annum, which was consistent with the ACD). Delegates were pleased to note that the former Government had decided not to pursue the option of Tier 3 licences.

17. Mrs. Street reported that there was still much uncertainty about whether the former Government's proposed reforms would still proceed, particularly in respect of ways to enhance passenger representation at airports. Delegates reiterated its concerns about the proposal to widen the responsibilities of *Passenger Focus* to cover air travel and advocated the need to ensure that the important role of airport consultative committees in representing the interests of passengers at airports should not be overlooked. *Passenger Focus*' current budget of £8.4m was noted and delegates highlighted that airport consultative committees currently represented passengers locally at no cost to the public purse.

18. Delegates debated the future role of airport consultative committees at some length and the DfT's proposed review of the 2003 Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees. It was noted that the *UKACCS Working Group* had contributed some thoughts to the DfT earlier in the year. Delegates were unanimous that there was a need to ensure that the guidelines remained flexible to take account of local circumstances and that they should not be prescriptive. The issue of public participation at meetings was discussed and the experiences of committees were shared. However, there were some member committees that did not hold their meetings in public and did not therefore support any revisions to the Guidelines that would place a requirement on committees to open its meetings to the public/press or to have public participation at meetings. It was therefore agreed that UKACCs would not support such a change in the guidelines and delegates felt that inviting

public participation at meetings should be a matter to be determined by the individual committee.

19. It was also commented that an important issue for the DfT to consider was the funding for consultative committees, particularly in terms of the secretariat, technical and other independent advice required by committees. The current guidelines did not clearly set out who was responsible for funding the activities of committees. Mr. Evans advised that it had always been the assumption that as airports were required to provide consultative facilities then the funding should also be provided by the airport.

20. Mrs. Street referred to the address given by Ms. Abbott of the CAA the previous day in which she advised that the CAA was developing a best practice guide for enhancing passenger representation at airports. She enquired how the CAA's work would be taken into account in the DfT's review of the Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees. Mr. Evans noted the comments about the need for flexibility and confirmed that he would liaise with the CAA on the proposed best practice guide. He also advised that the DfT aimed to undertake a consultation on the draft revised Guidelines later in 2010.

21. Delegates were unanimous in agreeing that UKACCS should play a fundamental and important role in putting forward views to Government on ways in which passenger representation at airports could be enhanced including advice on the role of a national consumer body for air passengers. Airport consultative committees' contribution to the provision of data and policy advice had been underestimated in the past and there was a need for the Government to have a greater understanding of the work and role of consultative committees. A group of Chairmen (comprising Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, Aberdeen, East Midlands and/or Leeds-Bradford airports and Stansted as a reserve) were appointed to seek a meeting with the Minister for Aviation to put forward options and ideas. The Secretariat would write to the Minister to highlight the issues and to seek a meeting.

### **AVIATION SECURITY UPDATE**

22. Delegates considered a paper providing an update on the current issues and developments with regard to airport security. The range of security measures currently in place was noted and it was felt that the Government should undertake a comprehensive review of airport security to determine whether all the measures and restrictions in place remained necessary. The significant costs and demands falling upon airport operators in carrying out Government requirements/restrictions were acknowledged.

23. Reference was made to the Government's proposal to create a *Police Border Force*, which could impact on current police provision at airports. Delegates recognised the importance of protecting the border but hoped that the creation of the new agency would not significantly impact on the general policing arrangements at and in the vicinity of airports.

### **PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY (PRM)**

24. Mr. Innes reminded member committees of the requirements of *European Regulation (EC)1107/2006 – Rights of Persons with Reduced Mobility when Travelling by Air*. A review of the arrangements now in place at UK airports had been undertaken by the CAA and a number of issues had been identified. Delegates commented upon current practice and experience at their airports and it was noted that a common theme across UK airports was the need to improve the rate of pre-notification by passengers. Communication between travel agents, tour operators, airlines and airports needed to be improved, such as clearer information on websites and on-line booking services. There was also a need to raise passenger awareness, particularly as the service was open to those who were not registered disabled.

### **NOISE ACTION PLANS**

25. A paper providing an update on the implementation of the *Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006* and the requirement placed on airport operators to produce a

Noise Action Plan (NAP) was discussed. Mr. Innes advised that Defra had issued the guidance on the preparation of the noise action plans in 2009 which required NAPs to be published to reflect the results of the strategic noise mapping exercise. Defra had set a challenging timetable for airports to undertake formal consultation and to submit the NAP by November 2009.

26. Delegates shared experiences on their involvement in the preparation and consultation on the draft NAP for their airports and of the lessons that had been learned from the new process. It was noted that some airports had adopted a comprehensive consultative approach using a range of fora and methods to seek the public's views.

27. Mr. Evans said that the submitted NAPs for airports in England were currently being reviewed by the DfT and Defra. It was hoped that airports would receive a response from the Department by the end of the summer 2010.

### **AIR PASSENGER DUTY (APD)**

28. The meeting discussed a paper, which had been prepared at the request of the *Southampton Airport Consultative Committee*, highlighting concerns about the previous Government's proposed increases to APD and the proposed band of taxes. Delegates noted that the new Government had proposed in its Coalition Document a move away from a per-passenger tax to a per-plane tax but the detail of the new tax was not yet known. It was not known either whether the proposed substantial increases in the current APD rates due in November 2010 would proceed.

30. Mr. Innes reminded delegates that UKACCS had previously supported moves for a per-plane duty but noted that there were concerns about some of the speculation that had arisen about the impact of the proposed new per-plane tax particularly in relation to domestic flights and freight. Although delegates were generally supportive of the new Government's move away from the per-passenger duty, it was felt that there was an urgent need to highlight to the Government member committees' concerns about the potential impacts of a per-plane tax, particularly in relation to domestic services. There was much speculation that the per-plane duty for domestic flights would be set at a higher rate. It was agreed therefore that a letter would be sent to the Treasury as a matter of urgency to highlight UKACCS concerns in the hope that they could be taken fully into account by the Government in formulating proposals for the new tax. It was also agreed that UKACCS' previous view that the monies levied through the tax should be hypothecated to environmental or sustainable transport projects.

### **EUROPEAN AVIATION UPDATE**

31. The Meeting received an update on current EU activity, and in particular the implications on passengers rights legislation arising from the cancellations and delays caused by the Icelandic volcanic ash clouds. Some practical examples of the difficulty in making claims against airlines under the existing legislation were discussed. It was noted that the AUC had provided much advice to passengers and airlines on the issue of compensation and that airlines were now pursuing a revision of the EU regulation.

### **MEMBERSHIP OF THE UKACCS LIAISON GROUP**

32. Delegates considered a paper providing an update on the air traffic growth at UK airports and details of those airports that fell within the Liaison Group's admission criterion. It was noted that there were no new airports where the consultative committee had become eligible for membership and that the downturn in the demand for air transport as a result of the recession had had a significant impact on many airports where in some cases passenger throughput had declined.

33. Mr. Innes reported on the requests that had been received over recent years from smaller airports seeking membership of the Group and it was questioned whether the membership criterion should be reviewed so as once again to include "airports of regional

significance". It was agreed that the membership criterion should be reviewed by the Working Group when it next meets.

### **UKACCS – SUPPORT SERVICE**

34. The meeting considered a paper reporting on the work of the Support Service during the year ended March 2010. Delegates thanked Mr. Innes for his work on the support service which was invaluable in keeping member committees informed of developments in aviation policy and at airports.

35. Reference was made to the UKACCS website and the approach that had been received from Google for advertising space. Whilst it was acknowledged that this could provide an income stream for the Group, there was concern that about the lack of control over the types of adverts that could appear on the site. In order to preserve the independence and impartiality of the Group it was agreed that the Google offer should be declined.

36. Mr. Innes also referred to the new subscription fee proposed to be charged by *The Times* for access to its online material. It was agreed that the Support Staff could pay for individual items if it was necessary and justified.

### **VENUES FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES**

37. It was noted that offers had been received from the following Consultative Committees to host the annual meeting:

2011 - Aberdeen (8th/9th June 2011)

2012 - offers to host will be invited

2013 - Edinburgh

### **VOTE OF THANKS**

38. A vote of thanks was extended to the team at London City Airport and to John Adshead for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements that had been made for the two-day event.

### **Liaison Group Secretariat**