

UKACCS – SUPPORT SERVICE

What this paper is about

A brief report on the work of the support service during the year ended 31st March 2010 including:

- News Service – para 1
- Websites – para 7
- Liaison with the Department for Transport – para 15
- Preparation for Annual Meetings – para 16
- Consultations and Information Exchange – para 18
- The Working Group – para 19
- Responding to Consultations – para 22

Points for Discussion

The Times has recently started charging for access to its news stories and other newspapers may follow their lead. What is the Liaison Group's attitude to paying such charges

Points for Possible Action

Whether to pay the £104 now charged by *The Times* for access to its news stories

News Service

1. This service, which is available to all member Committees, aims to keep members in touch with matters of interest to consultative committees and to help officers of Committees keep abreast of happenings in the industry both locally and nationally and so help to ensure consultative committees operate in context.
2. The gathering of information for this service involves the constant monitoring of specialist news sources, most of them on the Internet, and regular contact with the news services of individual airports, the EC, DfT and other similar bodies. The increasing number of bodies using RSS for their web-based news services is a great help in permitting easy trawls for up-to-date the information and the service this year invested in software to make the scanning of RSS feeds even easier. Help is provided by the e-mail news services of other bodies to which the service subscribes
3. Most news is distributed by e-mail although there is postal back-up for those without the necessary facilities or who for other reasons need hard copies. Where possible the material is targeted at those Committees with a particular interest; for example, purely local items are normally sent only to the consultative committee for the airport concerned while BAA Corporate items are sent only to the committees at the BAA airports. One Committee receives only a list of general interest items distributed in the previous month – they can then select only the items of particular interest to them.
4. During 2009/10 a total of 3896 items were distributed, an average of 325 items per month or 11 items per day. Of this total 920 (an average of 77 per month or 2.5 per day) were items of general interest and the remainder of local significance only. These totals are down a little on the previous year. In part this reflects a more pronounced summer break than usual because those providing the service moved house and were without internet facilities for about a month. And, of course, the numbers are driven by the amount of aviation news which emerges over a particular period and there were “slow” periods during the year.
5. As reported last year we are now including in all news service e-mails a note as to the source of those of our the information and individual items all now carry a disclaimer indicating that the text is drawn from an external source and that any views expressed are not necessarily those of UKACCs or its Support Staff.
6. One matter which will need to be addressed is what to do where newspapers introduce a charge to access their news stories on the internet. *The Times* is now charging £2 per news item or £104 for access for a year. In 2009/10 we sent round 69 items from *The Times* or the *Sunday Times*. Are we to pay the £104 subscriptions in order to maintain access to the stories of this newspaper? Based on usage last year this would cost about £1.50 per item. And looking ahead, the *News Service* draws on a similar number of stories from each of the *Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Scotsman*, *The Independent* and their Sunday equivalents. These newspapers are not at present charging for their output but if they follow the lead set by *The Times* the Liaison Group will need to decide whether or not to pay the subscription charges.

Websites

7. This work is in two parts:
 - (a) **The UKACCS website**
8. This is the collective website¹ of the Liaison Group with pages including:
 - background information about consultative committees (including the legislation and guidelines),
 - the latest information on current issues at both UK and EU levels
 - contact information for individual committees in the Group

¹ <http://www.ukaccs.info/>

- details of the Annual Meetings (including copies of the papers discussed) and
 - links to related websites
9. This site is regularly reviewed and updated as necessary, drawing mostly on the information culled from the *News Service*. Since it was established in August 2003 the site has attracted 10,100 visitors and over the last year there has been an average of 108 visits per month. In recent times, perhaps because of increased interest in some aviation issues, there has been increased usage; for example in March 2010 there were 163 visits. Since the site was launched there have been nearly 16,000 page views and over the past year there have been 157 page views per month on average. Again the monthly totals have been higher of late with 230 page views in March 2010. These usage figures are quite high for a site of its kind. Visitors to the site are mostly from the UK but there are visitors also from Europe and the US and one or two from the Far East. In some instances the source of a visit is known and from this data we know that many visitors reach the site via Google, AUC and the websites of individual consultative committees.
10. Until recently most of the topics of current were to be found on the “Issues” and “Euro-round-up” pages of the site. However, both pages had grown to be very large and unwieldy. So in early May 2010 the site was re-organised and the information on current topics is now to be found on one of the following pages:
- Airport Planning and Development
 - Noise
 - Aviation Security
 - Climate Change
 - Passenger Rights
 - Other UK Airport Issues
 - Euro Roundup
 - Local Matters
 - Aviation Glossary

Committees are reminded that we aim to update the material on these pages on a regular basis and it may therefore save work to use it in preparing papers for individual committees.

(b) Websites for individual committees

11. Within the framework of the main UKACCs site individual sites have been provided for the following committees:
- London Gatwick at www.ukacccs.info/gatwick - this site can also be accessed via its own URL www.gatcom.org.uk
 - Edinburgh at www.ukacccs.info/edinburgh
 - Liverpool John Lennon at www.ukacccs.info/liverpool - this site can also be accessed via its own URL www.ljlacc.org.uk
 - Stansted at www.ukacccs.info/stansted - this site can also be accessed via its own URL at www.stacc.info
 - Birmingham at www.ukacccs.info/bham
 - Manchester at www.ukacccs.info/manchester
 - Glasgow Prestwick at www.ukacccs.info/prestwick - this is a new site built for the Prestwick committee in March 2010 – some tweaking of the content remains to be carried out.
12. There is no charge for the design and maintenance of these sites, the cost of which is included in the subscription for the support service. Committees do, however, meet the extra cost where it opts for its own URL. Set-up includes exchanging links with local authorities and other local bodies. As mentioned above one new site has been set up during the year. It is understood another may be requested before long.

13. The work involves liaison with the Secretary of the Committees in question in processing and loading committee agenda papers and minutes and otherwise in keeping the sites up-to-date - the service makes such changes about 7-8 times every month and in some instances the work is quite time consuming. Site statistics are sent to the Committee Secretary once a week.
14. The Committees at London Heathrow, London City, London Luton and Robin Hood Doncaster Sheffield have websites of their own provided and maintained under separate arrangements.

Liaison with the Department for Transport

15. It is important to keep in touch with those of the Department's officials responsible for aviation policy. In this connection we are fortunate to have Frank Evans as our main point of contact. He ensures ease of access to the right people in the Department and other agencies and generally helps the service and the Secretariat in its efforts to provide a good service to the Liaison Group. It is the normal practice to meet Frank at the Department at least once a year. The last meeting was September 2009 when much of the discussion focussed on matters to be discussed at January 2010 meeting of the Working Group as well this Annual Meeting.

Annual Meetings

16. The service assists Conference Secretariat in making the arrangements for the Annual Liaison meeting not least in the preparation of many of the papers for the consideration of members at the meeting – a very considerable undertaking which usually involves detailed research and consultation with the EU, DfT, Defra and other bodies.
17. Once again this year the Service has managed the applications to attend the Annual Meeting, hotel lists etc. As previously reported this process has been largely automated through the use of a database from which required reports can be abstracted without difficulty. The system works well in practice and is being used on an ongoing basis.

Consultations and Information Exchange

18. If required the service acts as a centre for consultation on matters of common interest and also for the exchange of information where, for example, the officers of Committees need the help and advice of other Committees. During 2010/9 the service performed in this way on a number of occasions, e.g. in relation to:
 - Environmental sub groups
 - Sound Insulation Grant schemes
 - The monitoring of noise and track-keeping

Working Group

19. The service also assists the Conference Secretariat in making the arrangements for meetings of the Working Group.
20. The Group met at London Gatwick on 26th January 2010 and the minutes of the meeting were subsequently circulated to all members
21. The outlook is busy and it seems very likely that it will be necessary to call a meeting or meetings in 2010/11.

Responding to Consultations

22. The service keeps watch for consultations on national and European issues and ensures that individual committees are informed of them in a timely manner.
23. The service also stands ready to represent the Liaison Group at symposia or briefings on particular issues or on Working Groups to which the Liaison Group has been invited to send a representative. This year we attended a DfT Seminar on its proposals for Regulating Air Transport and two CAA seminars on drafting airport licences.

24. On issues where it might be helpful the service will organise a collective response to consultation proposals as necessary. This year, after discussions in the Working Group, we put in a collective response on the Government's proposals for Regulating Air Transport. We have also been in touch with the Department for Transport and other interested parties in relation to the preservation of regional services to the London airports, especially Heathrow – a matter of great concern to a number of members about which there have also been discussions in the Working Group.

Stuart Innes
May 2010