

ANNUAL MEETING – LIAISON GROUP OF UK AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES

NOTE OF THE 35TH ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 8 JUNE 2011 AT ABERDEEN AIRPORT

Present:

Aberdeen	-	Dr. Peter Smart (Chairman of the meeting)
	-	Mr. Bryan Broomfield
	-	Mrs. Alison Sharp
	-	Mr Eric Melrose
Belfast City	-	Mr. Alan Crowe
Birmingham	-	Mr. Viv Astling
Bristol	-	Mrs. Margaret Thornton
Cardiff	-	Mr. David Crompton
Durham Tees Valley	-	Mr. David Lyonette
		Mr. David Cosgrove
East Midlands	-	Mr. Barrie Whyman
Edinburgh	-	Mr. Tom Wright
Gatwick	-	Dr. John Godfrey
		Mrs. Paula Street
Glasgow	-	Mr. John Richmond
Glasgow Prestwick	-	Mr. Nigel Wallace
Heathrow	-	Mr. Sam Jones
	-	Mr. Philip Carlisle
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
Southampton	-	Mr. Godfrey Olson
		Mr. Richard Ward
Stansted	-	Mr. Rufus Barnes
	-	Mr. Graham Redgwell
Conference Secretary -		Mr. Barry Smith
Department for Transport -		Mr. Frank Evans
Civil Aviation Authority -		Ms. Jackie Knight

Observer:

Aviation Branch, Transport Scotland – Mr. Martin Ritchie

NOTES OF THE LAST MEETING

1. The notes of the last meeting held on 3 June 2010 were received and noted.

DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE FRAMEWORK FOR UK AVIATION: SCOPING DOCUMENT

2. Delegates received a paper by the Secretariat giving details of the Government's Aviation Scoping Document which discussed the three strategic themes of aviation and the economy, aviation and climate change and aviation and the local environment. Details were also given of all the questions posed in the consultation document.

3. Frank Evans, DfT briefed the Group on the key elements of the Scoping Document and key issues of interest to member committees (a copy of the presentation is available on the UKACCs website at: <http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting11.html>).

4. Delegates considered the issue of international and regional connectivity and the importance of growth in the aviation sector to support regional economies. It was essential that any future aviation policy encouraged inward investment through direct point to point international connectivity and also through point to point connectivity to London. Delegates acknowledged that in the long term High Speed Rail 2 (HS2) would have a role to play but it would not provide a substitute for regional air links to London from the far regions of the UK. Delegates also commented that the HS2 network would not have connections to Gatwick or Stansted airports and would not have a connection to Heathrow for at least 20 years.

5. Delegates also acknowledged that airport companies were private sector enterprises but as capacity was becoming more and more limited at the London airports, principally at Heathrow and Gatwick, domestic services were constantly under threat as airlines choose to switch to more profitable international routes. Protecting regional slots for domestic services would require airports to act against their own commercial interests so delegates felt that it was an important matter for the Government to address by:

- accepting that the PSO legislation was not appropriate for protecting slots for UK point-to-point domestic services
- seeking a review of the slot allocation rules – there was a need to look at slot allocation in a different way.

6. Whilst the majority of delegates supported the Government's desire to seek a rebalancing of regional economies across the UK, there was concern about the long term damage that would be caused to the future position of Heathrow and UK plc in the global market/economy. Restricting capacity at Heathrow would mean that airlines would look to develop routes and services at other international hub airports resulting in less choice for UK passengers and thus a negative long term impact on Heathrow.

7. In respect of the local impact questions, delegates considered the Government's suggestion of greater dispersal of flightpaths across a wider area to share the burden of noise disturbance more widely. Delegates did not support the suggestion of greater dispersal or the creation more preferred aircraft routings. Delegates did however see merit in the Government considering the possibility arising from the use of modern accurate on-board navigation systems, to vary the concentrated flight paths within the NPR swathes so that paths within a NPR were used on different days to provide respite for those living directly under flightpaths.

8. As regards night flights, delegates stressed the need for flexibility within any emerging policy framework which recognised that there were differing needs at all airports. It was important therefore that night flights regimes were discussed and agreed locally rather than imposed by central Government.

9. Delegates questioned why noise created by other forms of transport, particularly during the night time period, was seldom reviewed or addressed by the Government in the same way as that for aviation. There was a need for noise disturbance from all forms of transport to be considered and treated in the same way.

10. As regards the question relating to the value of airport consultative committees (ACCs) delegates felt it important to emphasise the important role and work of ACCs in effectively bringing together the different interests around airports to discuss matters of concern and common interest. There was a need to retain flexibility in the way in which ACCs were constituted and operated which took into account local circumstances. Delegates also recognised that there may be a need to promote better the work of ACCs and that this could be addressed locally by the interests serving on the individual committees and the airport operator.

11. It was agreed therefore that UKACCs would prepare responses to questions:

- 5.9 and 5.25 to 5.27 to reiterate UKACCs view about the need to protect access at London airports, principally Heathrow and Gatwick, for essential regional services serving the far regions of the UK where rail transport does not provide a viable alternative.
- 5.18 to 5.20 to reflect the view that HS2 will not provide a substitute for regional air services and that HS2 was unlikely to be extended to reach some cities currently served by airports.
- 5.39 to urge the Government to rethink the level of APD and particularly the potential of a double taxation on airlines when aviation joins the EU ETS in 2012 and also of the possible financial or business retaliation by foreign governments.
- 5.40 to 5.44 to emphasise the existence and role of ACCs and that there is a need for flexibility of operation - one size does not fit all - and to suggest that the existence and work of ACCs be promoted better.
- 5.46 to 5.48 to emphasise that there was a need for a flexible framework to address noise disturbance to recognize that issues were different to each airport. To also highlight that UKACCs did not support the greater dispersal of flightpaths but suggested that greater flexibility in the use of existing routes (e.g. within the total swathe of routes rather than just flying the centre line) be considered so as to share the burden for those communities beneath the flightpaths. Night flight regimes should be discussed and agreed locally rather than imposed by central Government.

12. It was agreed that ACCs would feed their detailed comments to the Secretariat by 15th August. A draft UKACCs response would then be agreed with members of the Working Group via email and submitted to the DfT.

ENHANCING PASSENGER REPRESENTATION AT AIRPORTS

13. Delegates noted a paper by the Secretariat providing an update on the work being undertaken by the Government and the CAA to enhance passenger representation at airports. Delegates also considered the CAA's current consultation on the role and membership of the new Aviation Consumer Advocate Panel.

14. Jackie Knight, Manager Consumer Policy, Regulatory Policy Group, CAA gave a presentation on the work of the new Regulatory Policy Group (RPG), the setting up of Aviation Consumer Advocate Panel (ACAP) and the handling of air passenger complaints (a copy of the presentation is available on the UKACCs website at: <http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting11.html>).

15. Delegates noted that work was progressing on the development of best practice guidelines for enhancing passenger representation at airports and were assured that the CAA recognised the need for flexibility to accommodate local circumstances. The CAA also recognised that there was a need for ACCs to continue to have access to passenger feedback and complaints data and wished to use the knowledge of the local ACC on consumer issues at airports in the reporting of priority issues to ACAP. It was also confirmed that the CAA was working with the DfT on the review of the guidelines for ACCs.

16. Delegates supported in principle the CAA's approach to complaints handling and the new ACAP. It was felt that ACAP should not only provide the consumer voice during the formulation of

policy and the regulatory framework but also as part of the external governance structure ensuring that policy was applied correctly and achieving the desired effect. In order for ACAP to have a strong voice it needed to have "teeth". Recognising that the journey experience for passengers involved a wide range of other organisations and agencies, delegates felt ACAP should be able to approach third parties direct to feedback its views and recommend courses of action where needed.

17. Delegates also commented that ACAP and the CAA should be able to embrace those areas of the passenger journey/experience where no legal protection existed. It was also suggested that a central research fund be available to ACAP if evidence based responses to Government/CAA consultations were needed on areas where information/data did not already exist. It was important however that ACAP did not duplicate the research work undertaken by airports, airlines or the CAA.

18. As regards membership of ACAP, delegates acknowledged the need to keep the panel small but felt that it must include a broad range of passenger interests and preferably representation from an ACC in order to take advantage of the working knowledge of ACCs of the processes and third party interaction at airports. ACCs also had access to the relevant airport information and data and would help to foster strong communication links between ACAP/ACCs and airports. It was therefore suggested that UKACCs might nominate a representative to serve on ACAP.

19. The changes to complaints handling was supported in principle as it was recognised that air passengers needed a clear mechanism to escalate unresolved complaints. The natural conclusion was for the CAA to take on this role provided the active monitoring of complaints handling remained at the local level with ACCs and for ACCs to identify where trends were emerging. It was agreed that complaints should in first instance be handled at the local level (airport/airline). It was vital however that the CAA should keep the local ACC informed of the complaints it received about their airport and were provided with a means to comment when necessary. Delegates also believed it essential for the CAA to establish strong communication flows between ACAP and local airport/airlines and the ACC.

20. Delegates discussed the proposed key performance indicators which they felt were very process driven rather than providing a way to monitor handling performance and quality of responses including whether the consumer was happy with the outcome.

21. It was agreed that the Secretariat would feed in UKACCs views to the CAA Workshop on 14 June and would respond to consultation.

REVIEW OF GUIDELINES FOR ACCS

22. Frank Evans, DfT gave a presentation on the progress made on the DfT's review of the Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees and the issues that required further consideration (a copy of the presentation is available on the UKACCs website at: <http://www.ukaccs.info/meeting11.html>). Delegates noted that the DfT was considering a number of areas where greater clarity and guidance was needed, such as enhancing passenger representation locally, resourcing, independent technical advice (in light of need for more evidence based responses to consultations). Delegates agreed that new and better guidance was needed on all those issues. Examples of best practice and problems experienced were highlighted but delegates emphasised the importance of the revised guidelines retaining flexibility as one size did not fit all and should not therefore be too prescriptive.

23. Mr. Evans advised that the DfT hoped to commence a consultation on the revised guidelines in late 2011 (when the results of the consultation on the sustainable aviation scoping document were known), with new guidelines then being issued during 2012.

24. Reference was made to the desire of some committees to have access to independent technical advice. It was agreed that the Working Group should consider the matter at its next

meeting. In the meantime the Secretariat would start to hold a list of known companies/consultants that could provide technical advice for ACCs. Details of an approach already received by one consultant would be circulated to delegates for information/use.

AIR PASSENGER DUTY (APD)

25. Delegates noted that HM Treasury had issued for consultation proposed reforms to air passenger duty (APD). Consideration was given as to whether UKACCs should submit a collective response to the consultation as there were different views across the UKACCs membership, particularly on the level at which APD should be set. However there was a common view amongst delegates on certain elements of the proposed reforms and it was agreed that a response should be submitted to HM Treasury to reflect the following comments:

- the principle of including business jets for the first time be supported but clarification be sought on what constituted a business jet flight. As well as exemptions for emergency flights delegates felt there needed to be an exemption for flights transferring key personnel/workers to remote destinations where surface transport does not exist such as offshore oil fields.
- the Government be urged to review the need/level of APD when aviation joins the EU ETS next year. It was essential that APD be off-set against the ETS or even abolish APD if financial burdens placed on the industry were not sustainable.
- The proposed regional variation in the rate of APD did not find favour amongst the majority of delegates. It was agreed therefore that a suggested alternative approach be suggested to the Government whereby the rate of APD be halved for domestic point to point flights where the surface transport journey time was greater than 4 hours.

PEOPLE WITH REDUCED MOBILITY (PRMS)

26. A paper providing an update on the requirements of European Regulation (EC)1107/2006 – Rights of Persons with Reduced Mobility when Travelling by Air and the current situation, was considered. Delegates shared problems and experiences at their airports and it appeared that whilst passenger pre-notification rates had generally improved, it was still the main contributor to failures in service quality to PRM passengers. The work being undertaken jointly by the CAA and the industry to improve pre-notification was therefore welcomed.

27. Delegates were reminded of the need for ACCs to monitor closely the performance of this important service at their airport.

UKACCs SECRETARIAT AND SUPPORT SERVICE

28. Delegates considered a paper highlighting the urgent need to review the scale of membership subscriptions ahead of the UKACC Working Group's review of the working arrangements for the Secretariat and the Annual Meeting planned for later in the 2011. The Conference Secretary reported that due to the severe financial constraints faced by West Sussex County Council which provided the UKACCs Secretariat, the County Council was no longer in a position to provide the Secretariat without the full costs of the staff time being reimbursed. The membership subscription fees therefore needed to be urgently reviewed to ensure that the UKACCs budget could fully cover the County Council's costs as well as an increase in the salary for the part-time support post.

29. Delegates greatly appreciated the support of the County Council over the years and recognised the need to ensure that the work of the UKACCs secretariat and support service could

continue into the future. The proposed increases to the scale of subscriptions were considered but it was felt that a more comprehensive review of the current scale of subscriptions and the support provided to member committees was needed. It was therefore agreed that the proposed increases in the subscription fees as set out in Annex 2 of the paper be agreed for a period of one year pending a comprehensive review by the Working Group. The Working Group was therefore asked to report its conclusions and recommendations of its review to the 2012 Annual Meeting.

IMPROVING SURFACE ACCESS TO AIRPORTS

30. Delegates noted the Secretariat's paper updating delegates on transport policy and strategy developments insofar as they impact on surface access to airports. Delegates noted Network Rail's programme of publishing route utilisation strategies (RUS) for England and Scotland and of the importance of member committees keeping abreast of the issues and recommendations of the RUSs.

31. Delegates also noted the report of the Gatwick Committee and its experience of the Government's rail franchising arrangements in respect of the award of the Southern franchise. It was felt that the franchising process needed to encourage bidders to engage with stakeholders on key elements of their franchise bid prior to it being awarded. This was an aspect that needed to be addressed by the Government in its review of the rail franchising policy. It was agreed therefore that the Secretariat would write to the DfT Rail Division regarding the review of the rail franchising policy to highlight the need for greater consultation with airports and ACCs in the franchise bidding process.

UK AVIATION UPDATE

32. Delegates noted the paper summarising current UK activity in respect of aviation matters. The work of the Government's South East Airports Taskforce (SEAT) was noted. The Chairman of the Gatwick Committee informed delegates of the partnership agreement that had been developed at Gatwick between the airport management and the UK Border Agency which established performance targets to improve passenger waiting times at immigration and other improvements to customer service. It was likely that SEAT would commend the partnership working to other airports.

33. Delegates commented that if the work of SEAT was to continue it was important that the CAA's national aviation consumer advocate panel was represented on the group as the Air Transport Users' Council was no longer in existence. Jackie Knight, CAA, noted this point.

EUROPEAN AVIATION UPDATE

34. The Meeting received an update on current EU activity. Delegates were informed that the EC was examining intermodal passenger rights. The Support Service would keep member committees informed of developments on this matter.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE UKACCS LIAISON GROUP

35. 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 membership 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 and passenger throughput had declined.

36. Mr. Innes reported on the requests that had been received over recent years from smaller airports seeking membership of the Group and that the UKACCs Working Group was due to review whether to reintroduce the membership criteria of "airports of regional significance". The Working

Group was asked to consider the definition and draw up guidelines for consideration at the 2012 meeting.

37. It was also noted that Belfast International Airport had now formed a consultative committee and would be offered membership.

VENUES FOR FUTURE CONFERENCES

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

2012 - offers to host will be invited
2013 - Edinburgh

VOTE OF THANKS

39. A vote of thanks was extended to Peter Smart and the team at BAA Aberdeen Airport and the consultative committee for the generous hospitality and the excellent arrangements that had been made for the two-day event.

Paula Street

Liaison Group Secretariat