

AGENDA ITEM

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committee Stansted Airport Consultative

date 27 July 2011

ANNUAL LIAISON MEETING BETWEEN AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES 2011

Report by Secretary

INTRODUCTION

This years Meeting took place in Aberdeen on 8 and 9 June and was attended by the Chairman of the User Experience Group (on behalf of the Chairman of STACC) and the Secretary. Aberdeen Airport acted as the host. As usual, the Meeting was held over a number of sessions and set out below is a summary of the main issues considered.

WEDNESDAY AFTERNOON SESSION

This session covered two events:-

(a) A presentation by Carol Benzie, Operations Director, Aberdeen Airport, who explained the current operation of the Airport and expansion proposals.

She made the following points:

- The Airport has five Terminals – one for general use, three for (three different) helicopter operators and one for oil and gas related flights to Scatsa in the Shetland Isles to join up with helicopters to the more remote rigs.
- It has one main runway for aircraft and three intersecting helicopter runways.
- It is the busiest heliport in Europe.
- Oil and gas related traffic is a major element of the Airport's activities, and dictates many of the routes flown by airlines.
- About 60% of the Airport's passengers are there for business reasons. The Airport would like to increase the number of leisure passengers. The latest figures show an annual throughput of 2.8 million passengers.
- There has been 24 hour opening for the last six years, although the number of night time movements is very small.
- The runway is being extended by 124 metres from its current length of 1829 metres.
- Aberdeen is not on the list of BAA airports requiring to be sold, but is regarded as a 'local monopoly', which has to be reflected in its accounting procedures and consultation policies.

- (b) A visit to Bristows Helicopters facility at the Airport, following through the process for embarking passengers (very different to the usual arrangements known by delegates); being advised of safety procedures; and looking at the maintenance unit and at the types of helicopters used on services to rigs.

WEDNESDAY EVENING SESSION

After some informal networking, the evening concluded with a dinner at which the guest speaker was Chris Holliday, Chief Operating Officer, Eastern Airways, who described the workings of a niche operator in the aviation sector.

THURSDAY CONFERENCE

A full note will be put on the website www.ukaccs.info. The conference was chaired by Peter Smart, Chairman of Aberdeen Airport Consultative Committee.

Items of business could be divided into nine categories, as follows:-

(a) Developing a sustainable framework for UK aviation – scoping document (full details available on aviation.policyframework@dft.gov.uk)

All ACCs have received a copy of this scoping document and should be responding separately. These should be copied to UKACCS for information. Delegates were advised that development of the framework is one of the five priorities in the DfT's current Business Plan. Comments should be made by the end of September 2011 and the intention is that a draft policy framework will then be prepared and issued in March 2012 for a formal 12 week consultation. The agreed framework would then come into operation in March 2013.

It has been made clear that the Government is seeking **evidence based** responses and is looking for consensus wherever possible, rather than a polarised debate.

Delegates considered what could be included in a jointly agreed response from this body. Subject to wording being finalised by the UKACCS Working Group in August, it was agreed that the joint response should cover:

- Paragraphs 5.9 and 5.25 to 5.27 (particularly the remoteness of some airports from London, where air travel is vital and not a luxury; the allocation of slots at London airports; and the long term viability of Heathrow).
- Paragraphs 5.18 to 5.20 (particularly the length of time before High Speed Rail lines become a reality and that these will never be extended to reach some cities currently served by airports).
- Paragraph 5.39 (particularly the potential double costs of the APD and ETS and possible financial or business retaliation by foreign governments).
- Paragraphs 5.40 to 5.44 (particularly emphasising the existence and role of ACCs and that there is a need for flexibility of operation – in this case one size does not fit all).
- Paragraphs 5.46 to 5.48 (particularly that noise is created by other forms of transport over the night time period but is seldom reviewed).

(b) Enhancing Passenger Representation at Airports

Delegates received a presentation on the work being undertaken by the Government and the CAA to enhance passenger representation at airports. This has involved a restructure of the CAA, which has created a Regulatory Policy Group (RPG) with four core functions:

- economic regulation of the three designated airports.
- enforcement of consumer legislation.
- the provision of expert policy and economic advice and analysis.
- collecting and analysing aviation statistics and survey responses.

The RPG has also subsumed the complaint handling role formerly undertaken by the AUC. All these changes now place the consumer at the heart of the CAA's work

The CAA is also seeking views on proposals to establish an 'Aviation Consumer Advisory Panel (ACAP)', to provide a forum for consumer advocacy in the aviation market. It will not have a role in campaigning on behalf of the public in relation to consumer issues. At present, the principles of such a change are being discussed, with details to follow in due course.

The CAA changes will be reflected in the revised ACC guidelines (see (c) below)

Delegates agreed a number of matters which the Chairman and Secretary of the Meeting will put into a formal response. These will cover how ACCs can contribute to the work of the RPG and ACAP; the proposed Key Performance Indicator measures; surveying methods; and the likely cost of any changes.

It was reiterated that the initial complaint about poor levels of service should always be to the airport/airline/handling agents, with the CAA providing the appeals system in the light of an unsatisfactory response.

(c) Review of guidelines for ACCs

Delegates were reminded that these guidelines have not been updated since 2002 and have now become out of date. They are non prescriptive and are intended for a named group of 51 airports, although any airport can use them as 'good practice'. The backing legislation is Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

The DfT is currently reviewing what might be included in updated guidelines. Delegates discussed potential inclusions and indicated where clarity is required. The DfT is likely to commence a consultation in late 2011 (this has had to await the results of the consultation on the sustainable aviation scoping document being known), with new guidelines then being issued during 2012.

(d) Air Passenger Duty (APD)

Delegates were reminded that HM Treasury is currently seeking views on APD – all options assume a continuation of the tax and are concentrated on the way in which charges might be made. It was acknowledged that views will differ from ACC to ACC but delegates were invited to see if there were any areas where consensus exists, so that a joint response could be made to the consultation.

It was agreed that the following comments could be made:

- Once ETS is introduced in 2012, there will be double taxation on flights and, in those circumstances, thought should be given to reducing or abolishing APD.
- A charge should be made for business jet flights (but who will collect it? and there should be exemptions for certain categories, such as medical evacuation flights).
- 'There and back' flights between London and the farthest parts of the UK should not have to pay APD for both flights, but pay one APD for the complete round trip. As a guide, this might apply to where any published surface journey would take four hours or more to complete.

(e) People with Reduced Mobility (PRMs)

Delegates were updated on the requirements of current EU legislation and the proposed abolition of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee. All were reminded of the need for ACCs to be vigilant that the legislation is being complied with. Delegates from Birmingham, Manchester and Stansted drew attention to issues involving their particular airports.

(f) UKACCS secretariat and support service

Some small changes to the charging structure for these services were agreed. A wider review will be undertaken and reported to the 2012 Annual Meeting.

(g) Surface access to airports

Delegates were updated on a number of issues, particularly the proposals for the High Speed Rail network and rail franchising. It was agreed that the DfT should be reminded that airport operators and ACCs should be advised as soon as any changes in rail franchises are envisaged.

(h) UK and European aviation update

Delegates discussed the many developments going ahead at present which had not been covered in previous reports during the day. A number of these matters will undoubtedly be included in future legislation and guidelines.

(i) Membership of the Annual Meeting

Delegates discussed the current make up of the Meeting and how ACCs become eligible for membership. The ACC Working Group will be looking at this issue further and submitting proposals to the 2012 Meeting

Provisional arrangements for hosting the 2012 Annual Meeting were considered. A host has put their name forward for 2013.
