



Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee

Chairman's Annual Review 2009/10

The New Gatwick

The most important development during the year was the sale of Gatwick by BAA to Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), which was completed in December 2009. BAA offered the airport for sale earlier in the year, anticipating a direction from the Competition Commission. A bidding process ensued, leading to agreement being reached with GIP, an infrastructure investment fund created by General Electric and Credit Suisse, who also own a majority shareholding in London City Airport. GATCOM had worked constructively with BAA for 50 years and we were sad to see them go, particularly the MD of Gatwick, Andy Flower, and other senior members of the management team, with all of whom we had enjoyed excellent working relationships over a number of years.

It was immediately apparent that the new owners recognised the value of GATCOM in enabling them to engage with a wide range of community and business interests, and were concerned to ensure the effective operation of the airport, without impacting adversely on local communities and the environment. The new Chairman of Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL), Sir David Rowlands, who is a former Permanent Secretary at the Department for Transport (DfT), and CEO Stewart Wingate



John Godfrey
Chairman





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(formerly MD of Stansted Airport), came to our meeting in January 2010. Sir David said that airports do not always make good neighbours, but GAL intended to improve Gatwick, be a good neighbour and build on the airport's good relationship with the local community. He acknowledged that Gatwick could not grow at the expense of the community.

Sir David gave us an overview of GIP's plans and vision for Gatwick Airport and confirmed that Gatwick is now a major independent airport company and, for the first time ever, it is competing directly with Heathrow, Stansted and Luton, as well as with London City, in a competitive London airports market. Gatwick would compete vigorously against all London airports for point-to-point, short-haul and long-haul routes and passengers. GAL wished to grow Gatwick not as a hub airport, as that was Heathrow's domain, but as an airport offering a broad range of services and routes. Developing point-to-point routes is a key focus, particularly encouraging long-haul traffic. He further explained that GAL wishes to increase traffic volumes off the single runway to achieve the currently agreed level of passenger throughput of 40 million passengers per annum.

GAL is not currently interested, Sir David told us, in building a second runway at Gatwick and he said there was enough to do at Gatwick to improve the airport for passengers and airlines. Even if a future Government looked more favourably at the provision of a new runway at Gatwick, GAL will honour the 1979 legal agreement not to build a second runway before 2019.

The current priority is to improve the security process through improved technology and passenger environment, in particular the bringing together of the three security search areas in the South Terminal. Reducing queues at check-in is also a priority through greater use of new technology and more efficient use of check-in desks. GATCOM found this initial contact with the new management at Gatwick very positive and we are rapidly building the close links which we formerly enjoyed with BAA.

Back in the summer of 2009, Neil Maltby, Vice-Chairman and I went to Westminster to meet Theresa Villiers MP and Julian Brazier MP, then Shadow Secretary of State for Transport and Shadow Minister for Aviation respectively. They made it very clear to us that the Conservative Party manifesto for the 2010 General Election would include a

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commitment not to permit any additional runway capacity in the South East. Such a commitment duly appeared in the manifesto and, when the new Coalition Government published its Programme for Government after the General Election on 5 May, it included commitments to cancel the third runway at Heathrow and to refuse permission for additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted. These decisions mean that the previous Government's 2003 Aviation White Paper needs to be revisited and we are taking every opportunity to impress on Ministers the need for a revised statement of national aviation policy, to provide a strategic framework for the future development of the aviation industry.

Meanwhile, the decline in passenger throughput at Gatwick stabilised despite the effects of the recession, severe weather conditions during December and January and then the closure of airspace as the result of the ash cloud emanating from the unpronounceable volcano in Iceland. Despite these difficulties, by the end of the year under review, passenger numbers at Gatwick were beginning to rise again and latest estimates suggest an annual throughput of about 33 million passengers, compared with 35 million two years ago.



Gatwick Railway Station

We have continued our efforts to ensure that Gatwick derives the maximum benefit from its strategic location astride the London to Brighton railway line. We have added our voice to those of the airport, local authorities and the business community urging the relevant authorities and operators to find a way in which the improvement of Gatwick station can be secured. We were told at our meeting last summer that there was a funding gap of £13 million. SEEDA then took up the cudgels and in October the Regional Transport Board agreed to contribute £5 million. Progressively other interests, included the new owners of the airport, indicated their willingness to be involved and a positive announcement was expected in the spring of 2010. However, the General Election, change of government and the need to find radical solutions to the financial crisis facing the country intervened and, at the time of writing, no decision has been made. We live in hope.



Gatwick Express

Another perennial concern is the further deterioration of what is still called the Gatwick Express, although what we now have is a pale imitation of the original product. We thought we had beaten off a proposal to insert a stop at Clapham Junction but Network Rail has proposed that this be looked at again in the Sussex Route Utilisation Strategy published in January 2010. Also, the convenience of Brighton commuters has triumphed over the interests of air passengers, with full trains arriving at the airport at peak times and air passengers having to cope with the inferior 442 rolling stock, whose narrow doors make it very difficult for passengers with luggage to board, always



assuming that there is room for them on the train. Some premium service! We shall continue to resist further degradation of the service (including the proposed introduction of gates to the Gatwick Express platforms at Gatwick and Victoria) and to support the provision of additional platform capacity at the station, which is the only long-term solution to the problem.

Airport Security and Border Control



Security continues to be a major issue at the airport. We have welcomed and established close contact with Geoff Williams, the new Head of Security for GAL, who was formerly Deputy Chief Constable of Sussex, and have had our annual meeting with the Gatwick commander for Sussex Police. The level of the national security state at Gatwick has changed over the past year from "Substantial" to "Severe" in January 2010, indicating that an attack is highly likely. The dangers were highlighted by the attempted terrorist incident on flight NW253 from Amsterdam to Detroit on Christmas Day 2009 by the "underpants bomber" which resulted in the introduction of body scanners at some UK airports, including Gatwick.

GAL has put a great deal of effort into ensuring that necessary security measures cause the least disruption for

passengers, with the result that security queuing times have substantially improved.

We have also met Nick Crouch, the Area Director of the UK Borders Agency, and discussed with him how immigration procedures for incoming passengers might be improved, without compromising security. We have noted with interest that the Government's Programme for Action includes a commitment to create a dedicated Border Police Force, as part of a refocused Serious Organised Crime Agency. This comes at a time when the new legal arrangements relating to aviation security and police service agreements appear to be working very well at Gatwick. We propose to keep a close eye on this development.



Geoff Williams, Head of Security, GAL hosts a tour of security for John Godfrey, Chairman, Neil Maltby, Vice-Chairman, Peter Hall, Chairman of PAG and Dan Steadman, Sussex Police Authority

Environmental Impacts

Environmental issues have continued to be a major concern of GATCOM. We are pleased that GAL has repatriated to Gatwick the Flight Evaluation Unit that BAA had moved to Heathrow. This reinstates a locally-based team who are better able to deal with public concerns about aircraft noise in the vicinity of Gatwick. We have contributed to the development, by GAL, of a Noise Action Plan, required by new regulations, and have emphasised the importance of the Plan containing measurable targets. Some of our members were disappointed by the resulting document, but the majority felt that it was on the right lines.

We considered an important paper by our Technical Advisor, Ros Howell, on the overflying of the protected landscapes surrounding the airport, including the Surrey Hills and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the new South Downs National Park. We have also supported the work being done by the DfT to monitor overflying of Horley and the effect of aircraft arrivals on communities to the east of the airport. We receive regular reports, co-ordinated for GATCOM by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council, on air quality in the vicinity of the airport and have been pleased to note some improvement in air quality in the Gardens Estate, Horley.



The Passenger Experience



The previous Government consulted us about proposals to reform the framework for the economic regulation of airports. Generally, we found the suggestions reasonably acceptable, but we were concerned about an element of the proposals, which involved abolishing the useful Air Transport Users' Council (AUC) and extending the remit of a quango called Passenger Focus (which has responsibilities for rail and bus passengers and costs the taxpayer £8.3 million a year) to include air passengers. I met Anthony Smith, the Chief Executive of Passenger Focus, and Simon Evans, the Chief Executive of the AUC, and this confirmed GATCOM's concern about the direction of the policy of the then Government, which seemed to be uninformed by any understanding of the work which airport consultative committees (ACCs) do to represent passenger interests, at no cost to the public purse. GATCOM therefore opposed this proposal and mobilised ACCs nationally to take a similar view. At the annual UKACCs meeting at London City airport in June 2010, it was decided to send a deputation to explain our concerns to the new Minister of Aviation, Theresa Villiers. The Government has recently announced that it has decided not to give Passenger Focus this new remit and is now exploring other options.



Our own Passenger Advisory Group (PAG), ably led by Peter Hall, has been very active during the year, forming an immediate bond with GAL's new management, in particular the Chief Operating Officer, Scott Stanley, an energetic manager with an American "can do" attitude and a passion for customer service. PAG has shown great enthusiasm and commitment in addressing service priorities at Gatwick. As a result, members of PAG have been involved in the planning and monitoring of a wide range of projects at the airport, including the North Terminal extension, the replacement of the transit link between the two terminals, the refurbishment of gaterooms on Pier 2, security queuing, body scanning and arrangements for helping people with reduced mobility (PRMs).

Sheila Plant, who was recruited onto PAG specifically because of her knowledge of the needs of PRMs, has been heavily involved in the re-evaluation of the contract following decision of the new management to end the current contract with the supplier, G4S, as there were

service performance issues. It is hoped that the new contract will be in place later this year. In the meantime, PAG will continue to monitor performance and is already encouraged by a substantial increase in the number of passengers giving advance notice of their need for special assistance, currently 80 per cent, compared with 20 per cent when the service became obligatory in July 2008 as the result of the European Regulation (EC) 1107/2006.

Vice-Chairman of PAG, Dick Hobbs, championed on behalf of passengers the need to provide the best possible experience for bussing passengers between the terminals during the disruption caused by the construction of the new transit system. The new transit was opened to passengers on 1 July 2010.



Gatwick and the Local Economy

GATCOM's relationship with the business community has developed well during the year, assisted by the presence on the Committee of active representatives of CADIA (the business organisation for the Gatwick Diamond), South London Business, SEEDA and the Tourism South East. GATCOM made representations on behalf of CADIA and local hotels and guesthouses which resulted in GAL extending the period for consultation on proposed increases in the forecourt access charges for courtesy buses connecting with the airport. I attended the CBI's South East Regional Dinner at the Copthorne Hotel and heard at first hand the concerns of the business community about the need to contain public expenditure, while providing the right investment to enable businesses to thrive.





MP for Crawley

Finally, the General Election of 5 May 2010 saw the retirement from the House of Commons of Laura Moffatt, who had been MP for Crawley since 1997. A former Mayor of Crawley and a former member of GATCOM, Laura was always a great supporter of our work and often opened doors for us in Westminster and Whitehall. We shall miss her, but welcome in her place Henry Smith, the new MP and former Leader of West Sussex County Council. A Crawley resident, Henry is thoroughly familiar with Gatwick issues and is a friend of GATCOM. We look forward to working with Henry and the new Government in the years ahead.

Dr John Godfrey
Chairman, GATCOM

GATCOM



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