

Chairman's Annual Review 2010/11

Your London Airport: Gatwick

Under new management since December 2009, London Gatwick Airport continues to make real progress in consolidating its position as London's airport of choice. GATCOM is pleased to play a continuing role in supporting this work, while acting as Gatwick Airport Limited's (GAL's) critical friend. We contribute to the company's thinking and, where necessary, challenge what it and other agencies, in both the public and private sectors, are proposing. We do this in the interests of all those concerned with the wellbeing of the airport and its passengers, the regional and local economy and the environment. We continue to work positively and constructively with the airport management and have developed the right working relationship, with our views being taken seriously within the company, but also by other partners, including the Department for Transport.

The global economic downturn has impacted on the aviation industry and Gatwick saw a reduction in the region of 2.5 per cent in the number of passengers using the airport in 2010, compared with 2009. However, Gatwick remains second only to Heathrow in terms of passenger numbers [i >](#)



John Godfrey
Chairman

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the UK and many other airports saw significantly greater percentage reductions in traffic. As the economic position of the country slowly improves, GAL is confident that passenger numbers will rise steadily towards the figure of 40 million per annum which can be accommodated within the present configuration of two terminals and one runway. GAL continues to take every opportunity to reiterate that it is focused on improving the existing single-runway airport and will honour the legal agreement preventing the

construction of a second runway before 2019. A future owner may have different plans and the land required for a second runway will continue to be safeguarded.

Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP), the majority shareholder in GAL, has kept us closely involved in its forward thinking. Since the completion of the purchase a proportion of the equity has been sold to other investors, mainly international pension funds, with GIP retaining control at board level. GIP's infrastructure fund management generally envisages ten years' involvement in an asset, although this may be extended for a further two years. GIP is committed to carrying out the significant capital investment programme agreed with the airlines and substantially improving all round performance.



An Airport for the 21st Century



Gatwick has been, and continues to be, a building site for much of the year. Over the two years 2010-12, GAL is spending £320 million (well over £10 million a month!) on improving facilities at the airport. Current projects include the refurbishment of many areas in the South Terminal, the creation of a new security area on the first floor of the South Terminal, the completion of the new approach to the North Terminal from the new shuttle and the construction, in record time, of a new, additional car park at the North Terminal. There is much more work planned in the coming years to bring Gatwick up to modern international >

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standards, but an excellent start has been made. Reconstruction on this scale inevitably involves disruption, but this has been managed well. Areas where work is taking place being separated from others and good information being provided to passengers on progress.

These physical changes to the airport environment, coupled with the positive approach to customer care pursued by GAL, are leading to significant improvements in customer satisfaction. This is particularly striking in relation to security, where the year saw a significant reduction in queuing times,

with quality service targets being met every month since the change of ownership. With the help of Tourism South East, customer service training has been delivered to all security personnel at the airport. Together with the investment made by the company in additional security equipment, the customer experience in this area has already been substantially enhanced and further improvements will be delivered when the work on the new security area in the South Terminal is brought into use during the summer.

Only about 10 per cent of the people working at Gatwick Airport are employed by GAL, so it's very important that the airport management works closely with all other companies and agencies whose work impacts on the passenger experience. During the year, particularly good progress has been made in working with the UK Borders Agency (UKBA), which is responsible for immigration and customs services at the airport. Ingrid Smith, UKBA's assistant director responsible for Gatwick, attended our meeting in October 2010 and, as a result, improved queuing time targets have been agreed and a memorandum of understanding has been signed which commits both UKBA and GAL to further improving customer satisfaction and to publishing the results on a regular basis.

GAL is also implementing initiatives to improve baggage handling performance by the airlines and handling agents. Baggage delivery performance times are now displayed in the airport's baggage hall for passengers to see. GATCOM has warmly welcomed both these initiatives and is monitoring progress.

I am pleased to report that the year has seen progress on the longstanding issue of the refurbishment of Gatwick railway station. We have been discussing this issue with GAL and the railway authorities for many years and have been particularly keen to see improvements made before the London Olympics in 2012. After long and tortuous negotiations, we were delighted when it was announced in September 2010 that the





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partnership of the local authorities and the new Gatwick management broke the log-jam by providing a generous funding package to bridge Network Rail's funding gap. The scheme will deliver a new platform, new signalling and changed track layout. The main station concourse will be improved and the additional platform 7 will be built between the current platform 6 and the car parks. The scheme design includes new escalators and lifts to platforms 5 and 6. Major construction work is planned to start in the Autumn of 2011, with some elements of the scheme being delivered prior to the commencement of the Olympic Games in 2012.

Developments on the future of the Gatwick Express service have been less encouraging. The railway authorities have pursued the amalgamation of the Gatwick Express service with Brighton commuter traffic, with predictable impacts on the service provided to air passengers. The purpose built rolling stock, providing easy access for all and storage facilities for passengers with bulky luggage, is being phased out, to be replaced with inferior stock and another element of the so-called premium service – the ability to buy tickets on board – is now threatened, with Southern Railway planning to introduce ticket barriers to the Gatwick Express platforms at Victoria and the airport. We fought this proposal very hard but have failed to persuade the Department for Transport that the franchise should be varied. We will therefore now work with all the stakeholders to find other ways of making the buying of tickets easier, rather than just restricted to on-station booths. ●



The Passenger Experience

Members of our Passenger Advisory Group (PAG), led by Peter Hall, have been involved with GAL in the planning of no less than 18 different projects during the year, including the elements of the major capital investment programme mentioned above.

Three new members were recruited during the year, including Ann Bates, who is making a particularly valuable contribution on behalf of passengers with reduced mobility (PRMs). Ann, Sheila Plant and other PAG members were able to help GAL with the re-evaluation of the previous contract for the provision of PRM services at the airport and the organisation of the new service, under the airport's direct control. We were very pleased to see that Ann was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List 2010 for her services to disabled people.

PAG has also been involved in the review of car park charges at the airport, as the result of which a "West End Special" ticketing arrangement has been agreed for people using the airport car parks to visit London theatres and other places of entertainment in the evening.

During the year, PAG presented to GAL a package of proposals seeking improvements across the airport for young passengers and families. Good progress has been made in the provision of new facilities in both terminals for this group of passengers. Initial customer research over the Easter period has indicated that the new 'Kids Zones' have been positively received. Plans are in place to develop these areas further, with extra equipment due to be installed in the coming months.

The work achieved in this area was noted by the Family and Parenting Institute who, after the Kids Zones opened in March, approached Gatwick to become involved in the new national 'Family Friendly' scheme. In June Gatwick became a founding partner of the scheme alongside Barclays, BT, easyJet and the Department for Education and is committed to making the airport more family friendly.

Assessing GAL's handling of passenger feedback and complaints is another key area where PAG members play an active role. PAG's periodic review of complaints received and responses provided by GAL assist in highlighting any areas of concern that need addressing. Proposed changes to be implemented regarding the process of handling feedback and complaints will be monitored closely by PAG in the coming months.

Improvements to signage to aid wayfinding, particularly in the South Terminal, have been another key focus. PAG has welcomed the new style of signage and innovative ways to



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improve wayfinding throughout the terminals. This has resulted in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) service standards targets for Gatwick for wayfinding being achieved in April, May, June and July.

GAL took great care to keep members of PAG informed about the impact on the airport of the heavy snowfalls which took place in November and December 2010. Despite the exceptional conditions, Gatwick was closed for only very short periods and the speed with which the airport management reacted to the emergency was impressive. Gatwick is now as well equipped as Oslo airport to deal with snow clearance and when Stewart Wingate, chief executive officer at Gatwick, attended a meeting of the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport with his counterpart from Heathrow, questions were directed at the latter. ●



Environmental Issues

Noise continues to be an issue, despite the fact that many aircraft are now much quieter than their predecessors. Alan Jones of Tandridge District Council takes the lead for GATCOM on noise issues and sits on relevant groups, both locally and nationally, which concern themselves with the management of aircraft noise.

Alan attended a meeting with Capel Parish Council during the year to discuss local issues affecting that area and he and I have both been involved with concerns expressed by local residents in the Hever, Marsh Green and Cowden areas, east of the airport, about the impact of noise caused by inbound aircraft. Although some ten miles from Gatwick, these areas are overflowed by aircraft as part of their descent to the airport. This is a technique designed to minimise noise disruption, but the sophistication of modern technology means that there may be a severe impact on individual properties which lie under the agreed flightpaths. Sir John Stanley MP has been involved and a working group, including a few local residents, has been set up to discuss the issues of concern in more detail. This informal group is due to report in July 2011.

Concerning flightpaths for departing aircraft, one option which GATCOM members serving on Gatwick's Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group would like to pursue with the air traffic control authorities is the possibility of aircraft being routed over, say, three routes >



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within the normal swathe of designated routes, rather than just with pinpoint accuracy along the centre line of those routes.

The Department for Transport, after much nagging from GATCOM, eventually published the noise exposure contours map for 2009 and, in April 2011, the relevant Secretary of State approved the Gatwick Noise Action Plan. We have very much valued the attendance at our meetings over the last few years of Frank Evans, representing the Department of Transport. We have wished Frank well in his retirement and look forward to working with his successor. Frank has been a great friend of GATCOM and an excellent link between us and the Department. The fact that he remained in his role for several years was a great help to us.

Air pollution in Horley continues to be monitored on behalf of the airport environmental health authorities by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and we are very grateful for the reports which their officers, particularly Leon Hibbs, make to us. Overall, there is an encouraging downward trend in pollution levels, including in the Gardens Estate, Horley, although this may be attributable to a decrease in traffic. ●

National Policy: A Sustainable Framework for Aviation

Following the immediate announcement after the May 2010 General Election that no more runway capacity would be provided in the South East, the Government in March 2011 launched a consultation document entitled "Developing a Sustainable Framework for Aviation". The publication of this document represented the start of a dialogue aimed at >



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giving a wide range of stakeholders an opportunity to contribute to the development of a long-term sustainable aviation policy framework. In launching the document, the Rt. Hon Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport, said: "Aviation should be able to grow, but to do so, it must be able to play its part in delivering our environmental goals and protecting the quality of life of local communities". In the light of the responses to the document, the Government will undertake a full consultation in March 2012 on a suggested policy framework, with a view to issuing a final new policy framework in March 2013. GATCOM will consider its response at its meeting in July 2011 and will see what common ground exists amongst our diverse membership.

Meanwhile, the work of the South East Airports Task Force established by the Minister for Aviation, the Rt. Hon Theresa Villiers MP, was completed this summer. The chief executive officer of Gatwick, Stewart Wingate, was a member of the task force and, in advising on how the London airports could be made better, not bigger, the report has drawn on a number of successful initiatives at Gatwick, including co-operation with UKBA. ●





GATCOM

Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee

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Support for GATCOM

Since Gatwick was moved from Surrey to West Sussex in 1974, GATCOM has been serviced by West Sussex County Council, with the chief legal officer of the County Council acting as our honorary secretary. This arrangement has been invaluable, providing GATCOM with high quality, independent staff support and enabling it to function as the leading airport consultative committee in the country, as assessed by the Department for Transport. With ever increasing pressures on its budgets, the County Council felt obliged during the year to review the basis of its support for GATCOM and I am very pleased to report that these discussions led to an amicable arrangement being agreed between the County Council and GAL, whereby the cost of providing the secretariat and technical advice to GATCOM will be met by GAL. This arrangement guarantees the continued provision of high quality, independent support to my Committee and I am very grateful to both the County Council and GAL for this outcome, which will enable GATCOM to continue to do its work on behalf of airport users, local people and the business community, on whose efforts the prosperity of the local economy depends.

I am grateful to all members of GATCOM for their continuing interest and support, and in particular my Vice-Chairman, Neil Maltby, whose contribution is invaluable.



Dr John Godfrey
Chairman, GATCOM



Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee

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