



**STANSTED
AIRPORT
CONSULTATIVE
COMMITTEE**

REPORT 1999-2002

STANSTED AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Constitution

The Stansted Airport Consultative Committee (STACC) was set up to fulfil an obligation falling upon the British Airports Authority (now BAA plc) under Section 2(7) of the Airports Authority Act 1965. This obligation has been updated by Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 and the Airports Act 1986 and reads: -

“This Section applies to any aerodrome which is designated for the purposes of this Section by an order made by the Secretary of State.

The person having the management of any aerodrome to which this Section applies shall provide:

- for users of the aerodrome.
- for any local authority (or, if the person having the management of the aerodrome is a local authority, for any other local authority) in whose area the aerodrome or any part thereof is situated or whose area is in the neighbourhood of the aerodrome; and
- for any other organisation representing the interests of persons concerned with the locality in which the aerodrome is situated,

adequate facilities for consultation with respect to any matter concerning the management or administration of the aerodrome which affects their interests.”

It comprises the Chairman and 20 other members, as detailed elsewhere in this Report.

Terms of reference

- (i) To advise BAA plc on any matter which it may refer to the Committee.
- (ii) To consider any question in connection with the problems of the Airport as they affect the users and communities and organisations represented.
- (iii) To make suggestions to the Managing Director on any matter connected with the administration of the Airport which could further the interests of passengers and the communities and organisations involved.
- (iv) To stimulate the interest of the local population in the achievements of the Airport.

FOREWORD BY CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE

As the various sections of this Report demonstrate, the period under review has seen an extraordinary increase in the business of Stansted Airport. A minor blip occurred in 2001 as a result of the September 11 terrorist outrage in the USA, but over the period as a whole passenger growth has been between 15% and 30% year on year. With larger aircraft and higher occupancy levels the growth in air traffic movements has not quite matched those percentages. However, such a sustained growth in business represents a formidable challenge to any organisation. Not only do the day-to-day pressures have to be accommodated, but also the planning, negotiation and implementation of the necessary increases in capacity to meet the growth have to be managed. That on occasion the Airport has resembled a major building site is not surprising, and inevitably from time to time the strains show in a variety of ways: occasional problems with baggage handling, security, and the rail service are examples. Moreover, an ever busier noise and traffic generator such as an airport, whatever its benefits in terms of employment and convenient travel, can not avoid upsetting some in the local communities. Uncertainty as to the future is another factor threatening good relations between the Airport and its neighbours.

Against this background it is, I think, only fair to acknowledge the considerable efforts made by the Airport's management to implement BAA's main board objective to be a good neighbour at all its sites. Of course it is in the company's interest to seek to meet local concerns in securing planning consents – as in the case of the 25 million passengers per annum (mppa) extension. But these efforts have gone further, with the local management board leading the diverse community of companies on the airport in such a way that their potentially adverse impacts are minimised.

Having said that, it is no time for the Committee to relax its vigilance in relation to all the activities and changes going on at the Airport. We believe we have a valuable role to play, helpful to Airport users, local communities and the Airport's management. I think that was well demonstrated in the difficult two months everyone – Airport management, local communities; the emergency services and the Committee – experienced in December 1999 and January 2000: the KAL crash, the diversion of air traffic over Bishop's Cleeve, the hijacking and the BAA proposal to expand the Airport to 25 mppa.

My thanks are due to members of the Committee and to the Chairman and members of the Passenger Services Group for the contributions they make : I welcome the recent addition of a representative of the parishes in East Hertfordshire, in parallel with longstanding representation of those in Uttlesford. In that connection, the death of John Baker, the Uttlesford Parishes Association representative, deprived us of a member whose tireless labours and expertise on noise and track-keeping issues were of outstanding value to us and those living near the Airport. I am also grateful for the excellent secretarial services we enjoy through Essex County Council's Graham Redgwell.

PASSENGER SERVICE GROUP (PSG)

Constitution

This Group's role is to focus attention on the needs and problems of passengers using the Airport. It consists of seven members in total – three appointed by STACC and four representatives of passenger interests appointed by Stansted Airport Limited (STAL). The Chairman is appointed by STAL. All appointments are for three-year periods but can be renewed with the agreement of the Committee or STAL, as appropriate.

Details of the current membership are given elsewhere in this Report.

Terms of reference

- (i) To consider on its own initiative, or by direction of the Committee, any questions in connection with the Airport affecting passenger/user interests.
- (ii) To act as an advisory body to the Committee on its considerations with, where appropriate, recommendations.
- (iii) To report to the Committee on its considerations with, where appropriate, recommendations.

COMMENTS BY CHAIRMAN OF THE PASSENGER SERVICE GROUP

The role of the PSG is to advise STACC and STAL on all matters that concern passenger and airport users, focusing particular attention on the needs of the users. The PSG includes representatives from local authorities, amenity groups, business and family travellers.

Our quarterly meetings are usually preceded by a visit to some area of the Airport's activity. During the period of this report we have visited the airline catering facilities, revisited the baggage handling operation, reviewed the various security provision (in particular baggage screening), the third satellite and the Terminal extension during stages of construction. The PSG has been particularly attentive to Terminal cleanliness and has been pleased to observe and comment on the improvements being made and planned by the new contractor. The arrivals forecourt area to the Terminal has attracted considerable attention from the Group. The various configurations of cones during and since the Terminal extension has been of concern to the Group, as it felt that passenger safety, with the many comings and goings of cars, buses and taxis, had to be a paramount consideration.

PSG members have also been concerned with facilities for people with disabilities, both in respect of ease of movement around the Terminal and access to their flights. Every effort has been made by STAL to accommodate suggestions made in this area.

The railway station, the coach station and the provision for "pick-up" and "set-down" facilities have been investigated. A recent presentation on the proposals for a new hotel gave the PSG an opportunity to in-put comments and suggestions.

In addition to these guided tours, members of the PSG make regular and unannounced visits to the Terminal to assess the standards of service being provided for passengers. Their findings are reported back to the PSG and discussed with STAL staff. At subsequent PSG meetings the responses by STAL to our observations are reviewed.

During our formal meetings we receive regular reports from the Terminal General Manager, the Head of Service Delivery and the Head of Retail Operations. We also receive presentations on various services provided at the Airport. These have included Buzz and Go airlines, cleaning contractors, passenger service providers and security.

As Chairman of the PSG I wish to thank its members for their conscientious efforts in bringing their observations back to the Group. The fact that two members of the Group are very regular flyers provides an invaluable insight into a passenger's perception of the services provided.

The PSG recognises that it has an on-going role as the Airport continues to expand and looks forward to continuing its helpful and constructive relationship with the Airport's staff.

SERAS

Throughout much of the period covered by this Report, the Committee was anticipating receipt of the SERAS report. It was eventually published in July 2002 as one of a series of seven regionally based documents under the generic title of 'The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom – a National Consultation.'

Just prior to the closing date for comments (30th November 2002), the whole consultation process was thrown into disarray by a High Court verdict to agree a judicial review sought by several Councils and individuals (including one of our Committee Members in a personal capacity). This related to the decision not to include any proposals for the expansion of Gatwick Airport within the Consultation Document. As a result, the original documentation is being amended and a fresh consultation process will now take place during the first half of 2003. The resulting White Paper will now be issued in late 2003.

In the light of these changed circumstances, the Committee decided not to put forward any views on the original Consultation Document, but to reserve its position. During its initial consideration, the Committee had the benefit of a presentation by Mike Fawcett, Head of Airports Policy at the Department for Transport

The Committee will now put comments forward during the new consultation process. These are likely to concentrate on the following issues: -

- (a) The adoption of a 'predict and provide' approach rather than considering possible measures to restrain and manage demand in the southeast.
- (b) The aviation industry should meet the full costs, in accordance with the principle of "the polluter pays".
- (c) The Government's acceptance in 1983 of the Inquiry Inspector's recommendation that an unequivocal undertaking be given that a second runway would not be built.
- (d) Major airport expansion should take place where the local economy requires such a stimulus to growth.
- (e) Aircraft noise, both in the air and on the ground.
- (f) Night flights and the likely demand for them to increase.
- (g) The enormous scale and impact of the infrastructure requirements for expansion and doubts whether the rail improvements are achievable.
- (h) The inadequacy of concern for the unquantifiable environmental impacts of expansion.
- (i) The absence of evidence of airspace capacity.

- (j) The inadequacy of current land compensation legislation.

EXTENSION TO THE TERMINAL

On 19 April 2002, the extension to the Terminal was opened formally. This enlarged the building by about 40%, whilst still retaining the open style of the original design by Lord Foster. It provides an additional 11,500 square metres of floor space, which includes a further 36 check-in desks, an extended security area, more circulation space, extra seating, extra toilets and a wider range of retail and catering outlets.

In June 2002, the third Satellite building was opened. This two storey building separates arriving and departing passengers and serves 11 stands. It is primarily, but not exclusively, earmarked for use by Ryanair at present.

The total cost of this new provision was about £100 million and it constituted an important part in enabling the Airport to handle about 15 mppa, the upper limit envisaged in the decision in 1983 following the Eyre Inquiry.

FEEDBACK CARD ANALYSIS

At each meeting, the PSG receives details of compliments or complaints received during the previous quarter as a result of Feedback Cards filled in by customers at the Airport. In particular, the PSG notes those activities where most concerns have been expressed and will investigate them during its tours of, and visits to, the Airport (either collectively or individually). Suggestions on how to improve services are then put to STAL for consideration.

For the last two years, STAL has set a target of receiving no more than one complaint per 5,000 passengers passing through the Terminal. The PSG is pleased to record that this level has been achieved, and usually exceeded, throughout that period.

QUALITY SERVICE MONITORING

Each year, about 7,500 passengers passing through the Airport are interviewed and invited to comment on a range of activities relating to services being provided in or adjacent to the Terminal and satellite buildings. These are then 'scored' within a range of 0 to 5.

The PSG receives updates at each meeting and is pleased to report that the overall average score has always been in the range of 4.0 to 4.2. The Group looks closely at any activity that consistently scores 3.5 or less and has found that the lower scores tend to be concentrated in three areas:-

- (a) cleanliness (see separate article).
- (b) split of smoking and non-smoking areas (this has been a longstanding problem and the PSG has expressed the view that the Terminal and all satellites should be made a non-smoking area. This stance is not supported by BAA plc as a corporate policy across all its seven UK airports).
- (c) transfer of passengers (the use of coaches/buses to take passengers out to aircraft depresses this score, but it is an operational procedure preferred by some operators, who feel that it helps to keep turnround times to a minimum).

CAR PARKING PROVISION

As several thousand additional spaces have been provided over the last four years, the amount of car parking available has kept pace with increasing demand and has enabled the agreed policy of eliminating justification for off-Airport parking to be achieved. A mix of long, medium and short stay car parks is available, with additional temporary spaces being provided during peak periods, such as over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

A major development is the proposal to provide some double level parking in the short stay area. This will be the first time that parking other than at surface level has been permitted at the Airport.

From time to time, the PSG is advised of concerns from local councils that vehicles are left parked on streets for several days whilst their occupants fly from the Airport. The PSG shares the view of STAL that, given the amount of parking available on the Airport site, such parking away from the Airport is unnecessary. It therefore supports any action local authorities take to prevent this anti-social activity.

CATERING/RETAIL PROVISION

The extension to the Terminal had led to additional catering and retail outlets becoming available, offering a wider choice to passengers.

A major concern of the PSG is to ensure that the retail provision does not act as a 'magnet' to draw away business from local town shopping areas. The Group is content that this is not happening. Much of the retail provision is located airside and is therefore only available to travellers who have already passed through security and passport control. Whilst the provision on landside is available to non-travellers, the outlets are generally small in size, and are largely geared to the air traveller clientele.

Whilst the PSG is pleased that a range of catering outlets is available, it has concerns that staffing levels in some are not adequate. This leads to tables not being cleared, causing annoyance to potential customers and making areas of the Terminal look untidy. These concerns have been made known to the outlets concerned.

CLEANING ARRANGEMENTS

This has been an area of concern to the PSG on a number of occasions during the last four years. Contractors clearly find it difficult to recruit and/or retain staff and this has led to periods when the cleanliness of the Airport has not been of the standard which travellers, STAL or the Group would wish.

The PSG has therefore concentrated on this matter on a number of its recent pre-meeting tours, and welcomes the firm stance taking by STAL in picking up on, and pursuing, the concerns it has raised.

BAGGAGE RECLAIM

On the whole, the baggage reclaim arrangements have worked well, although there was a blip during 2002 following the decision of Ryanair to change its handling agent, from Servisair to Groundstar. The PSG is pleased that the handling agent responded to this problem by recruiting additional staff and bringing reclaim times back down to an acceptable level.

The PSG supports the use of reclaim carousels to cater for more than one flight arrival. The carousels are large enough to cope with two or three flights at a time and this helps speed up reclaim times at minimal inconvenience to passengers.

SPECIAL NEEDS PROVISION

The provision of services to passengers with special needs (those requiring wheelchair assistance) has continued to be problematical. The service is put out to contract, but the PSG feels that the contractors have often tended to treat it as an 'add-on' to their activities, rather than as a core service. There have been three different operators during the period covered by this Report, with a need for STAL to step in with emergency arrangements from time to time when the contractor has withdrawn.

The PSG now hopes for a period of stability, particularly given the need to fully implement the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

GROWTH OF THE AIRPORT 1999-2002

In the four years covered by this Report, the annual moving total of passengers has increased by 137%. Details at June and December each year are set out below:-

<u>Date</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Passengers</u> (as a moving annual total)
December	1998	6,831,740
June	1999	8,078,902
December	1999	9,420,000
June	2000	10,759,579
December	2000	11,990,809
June	2001	13,050,973
December	2001	13,784,591
June	2002	14,660,634
December	2002	16,170,876

Despite this substantial increase, passenger loads per aircraft (accompanied by the use of larger aircraft) have increased even more dramatically, so that during this period the number of Air Transport Movements has increased by only 69% (from 105,038 to 170,774).

SURFACE ACCESS LINKS

Although somewhat surprisingly the level of public transport access to the Airport by users is the highest in the UK, at 33%, a key objective is to increase this (to 35% in the first instance).

Rail services

Rail was always intended as a major route of entry to the Airport. As a result, a sizeable railway station was provided from the outset and the Committee is pleased that the station and lines have been able to cope with demand so far. Longer and more frequent trains have been provided as demand increased. The hours that services are available have also been extended, with early morning and late night periods now covered. The re-opening of the service to Cambridge and beyond has been welcomed.

It is disappointing, although understandable, that, to facilitate major upgrading work on the Liverpool Street line, the operation of the Stansted Express has had to be suspended on Sundays. This will apply well into 2004.

Coach/Bus services

Although various changes have occurred in this period, the network of provision still remains extensive. These services will play an important role in increasing the percentage of passengers using public (rather than personal) transport to get to and from the Airport.

As well as services being provided for air passengers, the coach/bus station now acts as an important hub for a network of services, assisting many people not using the Airport directly.

The Committee welcomes the encouragement given to bus services, including direct financial support for some local routes by STAL, which benefits the local community as well as air passengers and Airport staff.

Road links

The long awaited slip roads to and from the south direct into the Airport opened in December 2002, relieving pressure on Junction 8 of the M11. The Committee welcomes this new link (which was jointly funded by the airport operator and the Highways Agency) and would reiterate the importance of timely infrastructure improvements being in place before any expansion at any airport occurs.

The upgrading of the A120 should be completed during 2004 and will greatly improve links to the east of the Airport.

The road system on the Airport site has also been revised and improved, to link with these new developments.

Forecourt layout

The Committee feels that, over much of this period, the forecourt has looked untidy. A number of temporary arrangements have been required, particularly during the period when building work on the Terminal extension was underway. Various layouts have been used, requiring large number of traffic cones. It is felt that this has created a poor impression to anybody arriving at the Terminal entrance.

The Committee agrees that a long-term solution should now be sought. The PSG is happy to put forward ideas to STAL on how this might be achieved.

Staffing arrangements

The Committee welcomes the Travelwise initiative pursued by STAL, and the associated company travel plans, which encourage staff at the Airport to go to and from work by public transport. It is hoped that these schemes will continue to expand in future years.

Transport Forum

The Committee holds a watching brief on the work of the Transport Forum, whose remit covers most of the activities touched on above. It also undertakes a similar role in respect of the Employment Forum and its initiative to encourage recruitment to jobs at the Airport from areas of significant unemployment to the east of London.

MAJOR INCIDENTS 1999-2002

Accident 22 December 1999

This was the low point of the period covered by this Report. Four crew members died when a Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 crashed shortly after taking off on a cargo flight.

The accident had many ramifications. As far as the Committee was concerned the major concerns were that local apprehension should be allayed and that lessons should be learned by the various organisations and agencies involved. A special meeting was arranged in January 2000, which the public attended in their hundreds to hear speakers explain the action taken by their agencies, both on the night and subsequently. A visit to the Air Accident Investigation Branch (AAIB) was arranged later in the year, when invitations were extended to representatives from Great Hallingbury (where the aircraft crashed) to accompany Committee members.

The visit to the AAIB was very illuminating and the Committee thanks the Branch's officers for their courtesy and assistance given on that day. However, over three years later, the report into the accident is still awaited and the Committee has expressed disappointment at the unusually long delay in publication. The report is now expected to be published in the first quarter of 2003.

Hijack February 2000

On the rare occasions when aircraft are hijacked to the UK, their point of arrival is invariably Stansted. Such an event occurred in February 2000, when an Ariana Boeing 727 landed after being hijacked on a domestic flight in Afghanistan. Happily, all passengers and crew were released unharmed after a standoff lasting several days. The Committee congratulates the emergency services and Airport management on the professional and skilful way in which this incident was handled and the inevitable inconvenience to Airport users minimised.

There are, of course, many security and safety considerations which need to be taken into account when hijacks occur. It is acknowledged that these fall to be determined by the Government. The Committee did, however, join with others at the time to express its concern that what is now an increasingly busy international airport should continue to be considered the most appropriate venue for handling hijacked aircraft, and would hope that an alternative location can be found.

September 11 2001

The long term implications for air travel as a result of the terrorist attacks on 9/11 are immense, not only in respect of increased security on board aircraft, but also in respect of the way airport operators have had to respond. On behalf of the Committee, the PSG receives regular confidential updates on security issues at the Airport.

The effect on passenger numbers at Stansted was less than at any other major airport in the UK. Whilst long haul traffic numbers (particularly transatlantic) dropped

dramatically, short haul flights held up well. The 'no frills' airlines at the Airport also mounted an extensive marketing campaign which, even in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, maintained growth, as can be seen in the passenger figures detailed elsewhere in this Report.

ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY (E&C) REPORT

STAL issues such a report annually, which is submitted to the Committee for information and comments.

The Committee is pleased that the airport operator chooses to set itself stiff targets, whose attainment is by no means a foregone conclusion, and that its performance is monitored independently. Stansted has always been seen as 'the airport in the countryside' and its location places a premium on satisfying a wide range of environmental issues and concerns, which the E & C Report seeks to address.

Copies of the most recent E & C Report can be obtained from STAL.

STACC COMMUNITY FUND

When aircraft exceed defined noise limits whilst taking off from the Airport, the operator is fined either £500 or £1,000, depending on the level of the breach. The sums collected are then accrued in this Fund. The Committee nominates four persons to act as an Advisory Group on how the Fund should be allocated. Although the final decision is then taken by STAL, it has always been willing to accept the Advisory Group's proposals.

To be eligible for consideration for a grant, the applicant must operate within a 10 mile radius of the Airport and be able to demonstrate both the value of the project to which the grant is to be put and the need for financial support towards it. Only rarely are grants given to individuals or non-charitable organisations.

The Fund has been able to assist dozens of local organisations over the last four years. Often what appears to be a small grant can make a vital contribution to such organisations. The level of funds is dropping for the excellent reason that many of the noisier aircraft no longer operate at the Airport and the number of breaches has diminished. As a result, allocations are now made on an annual, rather than twice yearly, basis.

The Committee would also wish to draw attention to the substantial charitable donations made directly by STAL and its staff.

EXPANSION TO CATER FOR ABOUT 25 MILLION PASSENGERS PER ANNUM (MPPA)

In January 2000, the Chief Executive of BAA plc, Mike Hodgkinson, came to a Committee meeting to advise it that, in the light of the growth of traffic, BAA was proposing to apply for planning consent for another stage of development of the airport, to enable it to handle in the order of 25 mppa, with a commensurate increase in the PATMs limit. Since that time, the Committee has been closely involved in helping to follow through this process.

This culminated in 2002, when STAL received permission from the local planning authority (Uttlesford District Council) to extend provision at the Airport to cater for 25 mppa. At an early stage in seeking this permission, STAL made a number of important commitments, particularly, that approval would entail:

- no additional runway.
- all development being contained within the existing Airport boundary.
- no changes to the existing night noise regime.

Major building works over the next few years will comprise a further extension to the Terminal; a fourth Satellite building; additional car parking, additional apron space; and a new four star hotel. The planning permission is coupled with a wide range of conditions, many of which are embodied in a legally binding agreement of the type pioneered at Gatwick.

We are pleased that this major and complex issue could be settled locally, without the need for Central Government intervention; in part, this reflects the extensive and effective consultations STAL undertook with local communities and agencies.

AIRCRAFT NOISE

A number of important changes in operational procedures were introduced by the Government in 2001, which brought about the following upper noise limits on 25th February (for day time) and 25th March (for night time) of that year for departing aircraft:-

	<u>Was</u>	<u>Now</u>
0700 – 2300	97dBA	94dBA
2330 – 0600	89dBA	87dBA

For time periods not shown, the upper limit is 89dBA.

These changes also introduced a system where aircraft should be at least 1,000 feet above airfield level at 6.5 kilometres from the start of the take-off roll. Virtually all aircraft currently operating can achieve this.

Local changes have also taken place with the agreement of NATS and the Directorate of Airspace. This has involved increasing the vectoring height at night from 3,000 feet to 4,000 feet. A years' trial is now being undertaken on a similar change during daytime on the Clacton-R and Dover-R routes (it is not possible on the Buzad-R route due to interaction with routes out of Heathrow, Luton and London City Airports).

In addition to eight fixed noise monitors, the Airport has a number of mobile noise monitors, which are deployed in different locations for periods of three or six months. Detailed reports are then drawn up using the data collected and shared with the local Council concerned.

The airport is also encouraging the use of Continuous Descent Approaches where possible and the Committee welcomes this development.

Night movements remain an area of concern. Consultations will be undertaken during 2003 on the regime to be applied by the Government for the next five years. The Committee has argued in the past that the noise quota for night movements at the airport should be determined by reference to what is reasonable for local communities to endure. It should then be for airlines to operate within that overall quota level – if they wish to increase the number of movements it should be achieved through the use of quieter aircraft. The Government's line hitherto has been to accept that, as airports get busier, an increase in night quotas and movement limits may be necessary. The Committee does not accept this as an appropriate approach and will reiterate this strongly held view during the consultation period.

FLIGHT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE (FOC)

This body consists of representatives of airlines, NATS and STAL and was chaired through most of this period by Andy Holmes of GO. Its main roles are to look at air safety; air traffic control procedures; capacity; planning issues; and environmental issues, insofar as they relate to flight operations at the Airport.

The Committee wishes to thank the FOC for its constructive attitude to these roles, particularly the airline operators who have enabled the Airport to achieve such a good Track Keeping performance.

WITHDRAWAL OF CHAPTER 2 AIRCRAFT

These are aircraft as defined in Chapter 2 of the Chicago Convention, as updated (such as the Boeing 707, Douglas DC8, BAC One-Eleven, Boeing 727 and older Soviet Bloc aircraft). On 1 April 2002, aircraft within this category had to be withdrawn from regular use throughout the EU. Whilst they may occasionally visit the Airport for strictly defined reasons (i.e. for maintenance purposes) none have since operated on scheduled flights in or out of the Airport.

The withdrawal of such aircraft (which, due to their older aero engine technology, were generally noisier) has helped lead to a substantial fall in the number of noise infringements, despite the stricter limits introduced in 2001. For the whole of 2002, there were only 29 infringements.

The Committee very much welcomes the phasing out of these aircraft.

GROUND NOISE

This is always an important issue at Stansted, given its rural setting. During this period extensive work has been undertaken with STAL by Dr Ian Flindell, a noise consultant, on a range of issues, such as appropriate locations for barriers (to cut down both aircraft and traffic noise) and agreeing suitable areas for ground running of aero engines.

There are occasional instances of poor practice but, on the whole, this work has been successful and the Committee welcomes the fact that relatively few complaints about ground noise are currently being received.

NOISE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

During this period a Flight Evaluation Unit was formed by STAL, with the merger of the Flight Analysis Unit and the Noise Complaints Unit. Staffing levels were also increased during 2001. The work of the Unit is audited by Uttlesford District Council, which has found that it deals with complaints appropriately.

The Committee receives reports at each meeting on the number of complaints made in the previous quarter. Throughout this period there has been a steady improvement (reflecting the use of quieter aircraft and the introduction of stricter noise limits) and the number of complainants to flights has moved from about 1:50 to about 1:100.

The Committee found that figures were distorted when an aggrieved individual made a large number of complaints (sometimes hundreds during the course of a month). These figures are now submitted separately. The Committee continues to review what is the suitable benchmark at which complaints become "multiple" and may increase the figure from the current level of 30.

TRACK KEEPING

This has been a good news story of the last four years.

Noise Preferential Routes constitute swathes extending 1.5 kilometres either side of a centre line. Weather conditions and features of individual types of aircraft are the principal issues affecting the ability of pilots to adhere to the centre line. STAL had set itself a target of achieving 95% adherence across all Routes of aircraft being on track. Some Routes achieved this early in the period and they now average 98-99% adherence each month. For technical reasons, others took longer to reach that level but, in the second half of 2002, it was being achieved across all Routes, making Stansted the best performing airport in the United Kingdom. Once this performance is consolidated, the next stage of development will be to try to concentrate flights on the centre line. Nevertheless, good performance notwithstanding, the Committee recognises that aircraft overhead will always be a source of annoyance to local residents.

Despite the progress made, there are problems from time to time when a flagrant breach of track keeping occurs. This tends to involve occasional visitors to the Airport rather than the regular operators. In December 2002 STAL issued a Directors Notice, indicating that a surcharge of £500 will be made in the future for flagrant breaches. The Committee welcomes this development.

In late 1999, the CAA, without prior consultation, even with STAL, altered the BUZAD departure route over Bishops Stortford, allegedly for safety reasons. As a result of widespread protests by the local community and the Airport's management, this aberration was countermanded within a fortnight. The Committee protested that such action should not be contemplated in the future without proper consultation – its adverse effect on local trust in the air industry generally, and Stansted Airport in particular, should not be underestimated.

THE CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Membership as at 31 December 2002

Chairman of the Consultative Committee : Mr Morris le Fleming

Representative	Organisation
Mr Keith Artus	Uttlesford Association of Local Councils
Mrs Mary Bayes	Hertfordshire CC
Mr Peter Cansick	ABTA
Mr Alex Chalmers	Bishop's Stortford Trades Council
Mr Anthony Drew	Essex Economic Partnership
Mr Bernard Engel	Hertfordshire CC
Mr Tony Fegent	Consumers Association
Mr Ralph Gilbert	East Herts DC
Mr Stan Goodwin	Epping Forest DC
Mrs Barbara Hayter	Passenger Services Group
Mr Andrew Johnson	Harlow DC
Mr John Kotz	Braintree DC
Mr John MacDonald	IATA
Mr Gerard McEwen	Essex CC
Mr Norman Mead	NWEEHPA
Mr Piers Merchant	London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Mr Duncan Peek	Association of East Herts Town & Parish Councils
Mr Gary Salmon	Airline Operators Committee
Mr Richard Smith	Uttlesford DC
Mr Paul Sztumpf	Essex CC

PASSENGER SERVICE GROUP

Chairman of the Passenger Service Group : Mr Ralph Gilbert **

Mrs B Hayter **

Mr A Chalmers *

Mr T Fegent *

Mr R Mansbridge **

Mr P Odrich **

Mr R C Smith *

* appointed by the Committee

** appointed by STAL

MEETINGS

The Consultative Committee meets quarterly at 2 pm (in January, April, July and October). Meetings are open to the public and press and are held at venues on the airport site.

Passenger Service Group meetings are held at 10.30 a.m. on the same dates. Its meetings are not open to the public or press.

Committee agendas may be accessed in local libraries or via a website www.saffire.org.uk/saffire/environ/stanexpan/stacc/index.html.

COMMITTEE SUPPORT STAFF

The Secretariat to the Consultative Committee and the Passenger Service Group is provided by Essex County Council, County Hall, P O Box 11, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 1LX

Mr Graham Redgwell (telephone 01245 430360 OR email grahamr@essexcc.gov.uk) undertakes the day-to-day administration of the Committee and PSG.

Mr Steve Bailes, Hertfordshire County Council, and Mr Nigel Bell, Essex County Council, provide advice on planning issues as and when required.

Recipients of the Report are welcome to pass any comments to Mr Redgwell at County Hall.