

## **Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees - proposed alternative for a national consumer body to represent air passengers**

The proposal to give Passenger Focus responsibility for air passenger policy advocacy and complaints handling is not supported. The dynamics and interfaces of international air travel are quite different from those associated with internal road and rail based public transport. The inability of Passenger Focus to deal with travel in London means that it cannot be an all embracing champion for passenger issues for any of the sectors it covers and for air travel this would be major defect as London City Airport would be wholly outside its prevue as would parts of London Heathrow.

There is however a compelling case for an adequately funded independent air passenger body with representation at the UK's major airports, preferably using existing structures such as airport consultative committees.

The Liaison Group would like to propose the following alternative:

- A reform of the existing Air Transport Users Council (AUC) with adequate funding to fulfill its new functions accompanied by a greater emphasis by the DfT on coordinating the various forms of transport in the UK to improve the end-to-end journey experience for all passengers.
- The AUC be given an independent statutory role with its remit clearly defined including powers of enforcement where passenger complaints are upheld .
- An obligation placed on the airport regulator to consult the AUC on airport licences and on airport/aviation policy proposals.
- The functions of the AUC to include:
  - complaints handling where passenger complaints have not been satisfactorily resolved by the airport, the airline or another agency at the airport e.g. UK Borders Agency.
  - to continue to investigate complaints made pursuant to regulations (including Regulation (EC) 261/2004 (Compensation for denied boarding or the cancellation or long delay of flights) as provided for by the Civil Aviation (Denied Boarding, Compensation and Assistance) Regulations 2005 (2005/975)).
  - research and policy advocacy on air passenger issues including those relating to surface access requirements to/from airports.
  - establishing links with major airports, specifically airports subject to Tier 1 and Tier 2 licences and to seek representation on the consultative committees at those airports or to involve itself with the work of those committees.
  - establishing links with other consumer bodies e.g. Passenger Focus, Travel Watch London and the equivalent bodies in the devolved administrations.
  - report annually on its work and the policies it is advocating arising from its research and complaints handling. This could also include formal representation at the Annual Meeting of the Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees.
  - making representations to UK and EU governments and other relevant international organisations seeking enhancements to the air passenger

experience where these can be substantiated by the AUC's own research and experiences or in protecting the passengers' interest in policy development e.g. proposed increase in passenger taxes/charges.

- providing evidence to inform responses to relevant European, UK Government and national consultations on matters affecting the end-to-end air passenger journey or airport experience.
  - generally to act as an advocate and champion for the interests of air transport passengers.
- The review of air passenger representation should also consider the enhanced role that Airport Consultative Committees can play in this area. Whilst not advocating that they should seek to resolve individual complaints they can and do provide a useful service in tackling with the airports areas where facilities and procedures work to the detriment of passengers. A good example of this recently has been the engagement of consultative committees in problems associated with the introduction of new services for passengers with reduced mobility.