

Unconfirmed minutes – to be confirmed at the meeting of GATCOM on 7 April 2011

Agenda item no.

GATCOM

Minutes of the meeting of the Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee held on 27 January 2011.

Present: Dr. John Godfrey (Chairman)

Keith Blake	- Crawley Borough Council
Trevor Brock	- Burstow Parish Council
John Byng	- Environmental and Amenities Groups
Barry Ealey	- Gatwick AOC
Peter Hall	- Passenger Representative
Alan Jones	- Tandridge District Council
Liz Kitchen	- Horsham District Council
Isobel Knox	- British Air Transport Association
Neil Maltby	- Mole Valley District Council
Simon Matthews	- Tourism South East
Pieter Montyn (Substitute)	- West Sussex County Council
Richard Olliver	- Reigate and Banstead Borough Council
Susan Parsons	- ABTA
Eddie Redfern	- International Air Carriers' Association
Dorothy Ross-Tomlin	- Surrey County Council
Jeremy Taylor	- Gatwick Diamond Business Association (CADIA)
Jim Woodward-Nutt	- Which?
Charles Yarwood	- Charlwood Parish Council

Also present:

Stewart Wingate – Chief Executive Officer, Gatwick Airport Limited
Andrew McCallum – Communications Director, Gatwick Airport Limited
Sean McKee – Head of Public Affairs, Gatwick Airport Limited
Liz Trevor - Head of Sustainability, Gatwick Airport Limited
Tom Denton – Head of Climate Change and Environment, Gatwick Airport Limited
Frank Evans – Department for Transport
Barry Smith – Deputy Honorary Secretary
Ros Howell – Technical Adviser
Paula Street – Assistant Secretary

Apologies for absence were received from Mr. Barnard, Ms. Brooke-Hart, Mr. Elkin, Ms. Griffin, Mr. Hersey, Mr. Lake and Mr. Pledger.

CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE ON ACTIVITIES

103. The Chairman was pleased to announce that Mrs. Ann Bates, independent passenger representative serving on the Passenger Advisory Group, had been awarded an OBE in the Queen's New Year Honours for her service for disabled persons. GATCOM was appreciative of Mrs Bates' contribution and wished their congratulations to be passed on to her.

104. The Chairman also reported that he had attended the Mole Valley Conservative Association Lunch in December at which Rt. Hon. Philip Hammond MP, Secretary of State for Transport was guest speaker. This provided an opportunity to ask questions about future aviation policy and it was confirmed that the Government would issue an aviation policy scoping document in March 2011.

105. He also thanked Mr. Wingate and his team for keeping him and the Chairman of the Passenger Advisory Group regularly updated on circumstances during the two snow events in December. The Chairman also thanked Mr. Maltby for attending and leading on his behalf the meeting on 8 December with representatives from Southern to discuss concerns about the Gatwick Express rolling stock and ticket gating plans.

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MINUTES

106. Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October, 2010 be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

GATCOM Steering Group Minutes

107. The draft minutes of the GATCOM Steering Group held on 6 January 2011 were noted (copy attached to the signed minutes).

MANAGING SIGNIFICANT SNOWFALL AND DISRUPTION

108. Mr. Wingate reported that Gatwick had suffered two periods of heavy snowfall. The first snowfall event between 30 November and 4 December saw accumulations of 24cm of snow which resulted in the airfield being closed for 2 days (46 hours and 34 minutes). The airport management had taken the decision early to cancel flights due to the significant snowfall and the resulting chaos on the surface access network which severely affected access to and from the airport for passengers and airport staff. The management team's key focus during the disruption was on safety and the welfare of passengers.

109. Gatwick Airport Limited had decided following the November snow event to invest a further £8 million on additional snow clearing equipment, making Gatwick's snow clearing capability on a par with that of Oslo. Mr. Wingate emphasised however that even if the additional equipment had been in place the airport would have still closed. Lessons had been learned from the first snow event and this helped Gatwick's preparedness for the second snow event.

110. The second snow event on 18 – 22 December saw two separate snowfalls of around 10cm which caused disruption for a total of 6 hours and 45 minutes. The additional snow clearing equipment was available enabling Gatwick to minimise the impact for airlines and passengers. Mr. Wingate thanked the airlines and their representatives for the effective collaborative working as well as the other agencies and volunteers who helped throughout the disruption, particularly in respect of passenger welfare.

111. Mr. Wingate also reported that the severe weather contingency plans were the key issue of consideration at the recent meeting of the South East Airports Taskforce. The effectiveness of resilience planning for the surface access network during severe weather was of concern to GAL and the company was urging the Government to address this.

112. Members, particularly the airline representatives, praised GAL for the effective and efficient way in which it had managed the two snow events but highlighted that the chaos on the surrounding surface access networks had hindered the airport's efforts to minimise disruption for passengers, airlines and airport staff. It was felt that the South East Airports Taskforce in its consideration of winter resilience plans should address with Network Rail, the train operating companies and the Highways Agency the need to have in place severe weather recovery plans which were capable of being implemented effectively and efficiently. Members also felt that the issue should be raised direct with the agencies concerned.

113. Resolved – That the Secretariat writes to the Secretary of State for Transport, Network Rail, the train operating companies serving Gatwick and the Highways Agency stressing the need to have in place severe weather recovery plans capable of being effectively and efficiently implemented.

AIRPORT COMMENTARY

114. GATCOM received the Chief Executive's commentary on activity at the airport since the date of the last meeting (copy attached to the signed minutes).

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GIP Equity Syndication Process

115. Mr. Wingate reported that GIP had concluded its equity syndication process in December with the announcement that Future Fund of Australia had acquired a 17.3% holding in Gatwick. He emphasised that GIP remained the largest single shareholder in Gatwick and retained effective control together with controlling voting rights on the Gatwick Board. The Competition Commission had approved this arrangement.

Traffic Performance

116. GATCOM noted that there had been positive traffic growth during October and November of 0.8% and 2.7% respectively but the snow disruption in December caused traffic to decline by 2.1% for that month compared with the same period last year (N.B. Gatwick handled 31,348 million passengers during 2010, a decline of 3.2% compared with the previous year's throughput). Mr. Wingate was pleased to report that traffic performance in January was showing positive growth in passenger numbers.

Routes

117. Members noted the introduction of new routes from Gatwick and that a key focus was on building long haul leisure routes/services. Reference was made to the recent decision at Heathrow Airport to charge regional services the same as other European services and of the negative impact this would have on regional air carriers and services, particularly those serving the far regions of the UK. GAL was asked whether it had similar plans to level the airport's charges.

118. Mr. Wingate advised that Gatwick continued to apply differential charges for domestic flights and currently had no plans to change the differentials. He emphasised however that given the scarce runway capacity in the South East and the need to make efficient use of the existing runway capacity, there were commercial pressures to use larger aircraft. The slots used for domestic services were therefore vulnerable particularly for thin domestic routes where smaller aircraft were used which would be difficult to sustain in the future. It was commented however that the smaller regional airports did not have runways/facilities capable to handle larger aircraft. Ms. Knox, BATA added that any increase in landing charges would have a significant impact on regional air carriers and airlines would make commercial decisions on the use of their slots. It was likely that the least profitable services would suffer but it was not possible to interfere with the market due to EU competition rules and the rules governing the allocation of slots.

Services for Persons with Reduced Mobility (PRM)

119. Mr. Wingate was pleased to report that the PRM service transitioned smoothly from the previous contractor, G4S with OCS staff now under GAL's direction. The staff had a new identity, uniforms and equipment and a consistent standard of service was being provided. GATCOM was pleased to note that there had been a reduction in passenger complaints about the PRM service. Mr. Hall confirmed that the Passenger Advisory Group's (PAG) audit of passenger feedback also confirmed that complaints about the service had reduced. The PAG was however still concerned about the standard of the waiting areas within the terminals for passengers using the service. Mr. Wingate confirmed that GAL was fully committed to the provision of a high quality service and was considering the issues raised by PAG.

Passenger Commitments

120. GATCOM was pleased to note that GAL wished to take responsibility for customer service at every stage of the airport journey and worked with the airlines and other agencies at the airport to develop its passenger commitments. The passenger commitments had now been published and were available on the airport's website. Mr Wingate advised that the aim was to keep the commitments simple:

- We'll treat you as our guest
- We hate queues
- We love to be on time

121. It was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate a link to the commitments.

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Hever - Noise Issues

122. Mr Wingate reported that a meeting had taken place with Sir John Stanley MP and a delegation of local residents from the Hever area when it was agreed that an informal working group involving some residents from Hever and Marsh Green would be set up to look at the noise issues in that area. Mr. Byng, Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC), requested the involvement of GACC in the Working Group. Mr. Wingate agreed to this.

Short Stay Car Parking Charges

123. Reference was made to the suggestions made by PAG at the last meeting (minute no. 85(4) refers) on the review of the short stay car parking charges and GAL was asked whether it had yet considered the suggestions of PAG. Mr. Wingate advised that a new Commercial Director, Guy Stephenson, was now in post and the matter followed up with him.

CRAWLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL DIRECTOR FOR ENVIRONMENT AND HOUSING'S REPORT

124. GATCOM noted the report by Crawley Borough Council's Director for Environment and Housing on planning applications determined and outstanding in respect of Gatwick since the date of the last meeting (copy attached to the signed minutes).

PASSENGER ADVISORY GROUP

125. GATCOM received the report from Mr Hall, the Chairman of the PAG in respect of activities of the PAG since the date of the last meeting (copy attached to the signed minutes).

126. Mr. Hall highlighted that one of the key areas of complaint during the last quarter related to the withdrawal of Gatwick's flight arrival information service from the BBC's CEEFAX pages. Whilst this was disappointing, the PAG accepted the reasons for withdrawing the service and fully supported GAL in seeking an alternative digital TV service at the earliest possible time. Mr. McCallum was pleased to report that discussions continued with the BBC and it was hoped that a digital TV service would be in place by June 2011. He also reported that GAL was looking to change its main direct dial telephone number to a 03 number.

127. Mr. Hall was pleased to report on PAG's continued engagement in GAL's project teams. The PAG was currently involved in 18 different project groups.

128. Reference was made to the PRM pre-notification rates from charter carriers. Mr. Redfern, IACA, advised that this was something that the charter carriers were looking at but the current IT platform used by charter carriers (from the 1970s) required updating. There was currently insufficient capacity on the system to generate automated messages to the airport. He was pleased to report however that two of the main tour operators would be upgrading their systems over the next six months which will help address the issue.

129. Resolved –

- (1) That the success of the airport during the snowfall in December be welcomed;
- (2) That PAG's continued involvement in a wide range of projects and operational matters be noted; and
- (3) That the concerns regarding proposed changes to the operation of passenger feedback at the airport be noted.

GATWICK EXPRESS AND GATWICK STATION

130. GATCOM considered a paper by the Secretariat giving details of the outcome of a meeting with representatives of GATCOM, GAL and Southern Railways to discuss elements of the Southern franchise of concern to members (copy attached to the signed minutes). The paper also provided an update on the Gatwick Station Improvement Scheme.

131. Members noted that the meeting with Southern Railways had been most productive but were disappointed that the introduction of the Class 442 rolling stock was now a reality and that

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no new rolling stock would be introduced until at least 2018. Mrs Street reported that Southern would continue to work with DfT on longer term options but it was important that GAL and GATCOM continued to urge the Government to take into account the full requirements of airport express services and accessibility issues in the procurement of new rolling stock.

132. Mr. Hall added that arrangements had already been made for representatives of PAG to meet Southern Railways and GAL at the beginning of March progress the areas for improvement and ticket gating options.

133. Mrs. Street also updated the Committee on Network Rail's improvement scheme for Gatwick Airport and suggested that Network Rail be invited to attend a future meeting to outline the design of the scheme and timetable for implementation.

134. Resolved –

- (1) That the involvement of the Passenger Advisory Group in the Gatwick Station Project Group looking at the designs for the Gatwick Station concourse be welcomed; and
- (2) That Network Rail be invited to attend a future meeting to outline the design plans and timetable for the Gatwick Station Improvement Scheme and resignalling project.

LONDON AND SOUTH EAST ROUTE UTILISATION STRATEGY (RUS) – CONSULTATION DRAFT

135. GATCOM considered a paper by the Secretariat giving details of Network Rail's consultation on the draft London and South East RUS and a suggested response to the consultation (copy attached to the signed minutes). Members were concerned to note that the draft RUS had re-emphasised the desire to insert a stop on certain peak hour Gatwick Express services and that it had not recommended any major infrastructure investment or interventions beyond the existing recommendations contained in the Kent and Sussex RUSs.

136. Members endorsed the suggested response set out in Appendix 1 of the Secretariat's paper and asked that the response also included reference to the need for Network Rail and train operating companies to develop and properly implement plans to manage the impacts of severe weather.

137. Resolved – That, subject to the inclusion of reference to the need for Network Rail and train operating companies to develop and properly implement plans to manage the impacts of severe weather, the suggested form of response set out in Appendix 1 of the Secretariat's paper be approved.

UPDATE ON THE COALITION GOVERNMENT'S POLICY PLANS

138. Members received and noted a paper by the Secretariat giving details of the Coalition Government's policy plans in relation to aviation, planning and transport matters and the indicative programme for adoption/implementation (copy attached to the signed minutes). Mr. Evans advised that the Secretary of State for Transport had announced his intention to issue in the Spring an aviation scoping document setting out the questions on ways in which to develop future policy. The scoping document would seek views on broad principles but would not contain specific policy proposals. It was the Government's intention to publish a draft policy document for formal consultation early in 2012.

139. Reference was made to the Government's proposed Tourism Strategy, due to be published soon, which might contain impacts or areas of interest to GATCOM.

SOUTH EAST AIRPORTS TASKFORCE

140. GATCOM considered a paper by the Secretariat providing an update on the work of the South East Airports Taskforce and the response received from the Minister for Aviation (copy attached to the signed minutes).

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141. Mr. Wingate reported that Gatwick Airport Limited was heavily engaged in the work of the Taskforce. The Taskforce was focussing on airport resilience and delay (including the recent disruption caused by severe weather conditions), improvement in the work of UK Border Agency in terms of passport control and processes involved, airport security, and improving the broader passenger experience. Surface access to airports was being explored at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted to identify what steps could be taken in the short term to improve the situation. Gatwick Airport Limited had recently submitted to the Minister a paper on issues that needed to be addressed at Gatwick. The key elements of the draft paper had first been considered by the GATCOM Steering Group and its comments had been incorporated in the submission. Surface access issues were due to be considered at the March meeting of the Taskforce.

142. Mr. Wingate also made specific reference to the on-going work programme with the UK Borders Agency at Gatwick to improve processes which he was pleased to be able to share with the Taskforce.

143. Members noted that the Taskforce was due to issue its report in July 2011. Mr. Wingate would however in the meantime keep GATCOM informed of progress and the issues under consideration.

CAA CONSULTATION – FUTURE AIRSPACE STRATEGY FOR THE UK

144. Members considered a paper by the Technical Adviser giving details of a consultation by the CAA on the Future Airport Strategy for the UK (copy attached to the signed minutes). Mrs. Howell advised that although the majority of the issues raised in the consultation document were matters beyond the remit of GATCOM, there were some elements of the application of the future strategy that could affect those living within areas affected by aircraft approaching or departing an airport. Mr. Evans added that the CAA's consultation related to the Strategy to be adopted and was not proposing any specific airspace change proposal. The procedure for any future airspace change proposal would be addressed under the provisions of the CAA's existing guidance, CAP 725.

145. Members endorsed the suggested points to be raised in the response to the consultation and emphasised the need for national policy issues to also be reviewed and addressed in the light of the new technology now being used for air traffic management. For example, the impact on local communities arising from the introduction of P-RNAV needed examination because of the implications of more accurate aircraft navigation leading potentially to the greater concentration of aircraft routes with consequent disturbance and annoyance in the local community. There was a need to better understand the issues. A member suggested that the Government should undertake a study to examine the causes of annoyance. Mr. Evans noted the points raised many of which fell outside the remit of the CAA as they related to Government policy particularly in respect of the question of aircraft routing concentration or dispersal. The Government's proposed long term sustainable aviation policy scoping document would provide the opportunity for environmental policy concerns to be raised and it was agreed that this would provide GATCOM with an opportunity to raise issues of concern.

146. Resolved – That the suggested response set out in Annex A of the Technical Adviser's paper be approved and submitted to the CAA.

FLIGHT EVALUATION UNIT (FEU) REPORT

147. GATCOM considered the quarterly report of the FEU (copy attached to signed minutes). Members were concerned to note that track keeping performance had shown a decline but were assured that the matter was being addressed through the Flight Operations Performance and Safety Committee (FLOPSC). It was noted that most the track deviations occurred on the 26 Lambourne wrap around route. GAL was working with the airlines and NATS at FLOPSC and more flights were now being guided by PRNAV on departure which would have a positive effect on track keeping performance, including on the 26 Lambourne route.

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148. It was noted that there had been a significant increase in the number of aircraft noise and low flying complaints mainly due to a couple of complainants registering a large number of incidents. Mr. Denton reported that the FEU was looking at the way in which complaints were recorded so as not to distort the overall figures.

149. Reference was made to the improvement in CDA performance but it was felt by a few members that more could be done by NATS to raise the height at which aircraft approached Gatwick and by GAL to address the issue of non-compliance through the publication of frequent offenders. The airline representatives advised that the achievement of CDA was dependent on a number of factors with safety being of paramount importance. The airlines did not support the suggestion of publishing performance data due to fact that air traffic control guided aircraft on approach and took into account all the factors that varied the type of approach that could be made. Mr. Evans added that the CDA procedure had been agreed nationally and any change to that procedure would need to be agreed by the DfT's Aircraft Noise Monitoring Advisory Committee (ANMAC).

ENVIRONMENTAL NOISE DIRECTIVE (END) NOISE ACTION PLAN (NAP)

150. Mr. Denton advised that further minor amendments to the NAP had recently been requested by the DfT that were currently being addressed. It was hoped to return the amended NAP for Secretary of State approval by the end of January. Mr. Evans advised that once the NAP had been returned, it was hoped that Ministers would be in a position to adopt the NAP within a few weeks.

NOISE EXPOSURE CONTOURS 2009

151. Mr. Evans was pleased to report that the noise exposure contours had now been approved and were awaiting publication. It was hoped that they could be published by the end of January 2011.

FUTURE SECRETARIAT SUPPORT

152. Mr. Smith reported that the current financial constraints affecting West Sussex County Council had resulted in tough decisions being made on budget cuts and staff numbers. The Council had decided that the post of Aviation Strategist would no longer exist within the Council after March 2011. This decision had an impact on GATCOM as the Aviation Strategist, Mrs. Howell, also provided the technical support to GATCOM.

153. In addition to this, he advised that the County Council was in discussion with GAL regarding future Secretariat support. He was pleased to report that a funding package had been agreed for the GATCOM Secretariat which was based largely on the current arrangements but without the technical support as that post would no longer exist within the County Council. Whilst noting that an agreement had been reached between GAL and the County Council, members were most disappointed and concerned about the loss of the important support given by Mrs. Howell as Technical Adviser. Members sought more details about the current and future funding arrangements and urged GAL to increase its contribution to ensure that independent technical advice continued. The Chairman assured members that he was satisfied that the agreement reached with the County Council preserved substantially the Secretariat support GATCOM had benefited from over the years and would ensure that GATCOM remained highly effective. He was still in discussion with GAL about the need to secure independent technical advice in the future.

154. On behalf of GATCOM, the Chairman expressed appreciation and thanks to Mrs. Howell for her invaluable contribution to the work and effectiveness of GATCOM.

DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

155. Members noted that next meetings of GATCOM as follows:

GATCOM Steering Group – Thursday 17 March 2011 at 10.00 a.m.

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Passenger Advisory Group – Thursday 24 March 2011 at 2.00 p.m.
GATCOM – Thursday 7 April 2011 at 2.00 p.m.

156. GATCOM also noted that the next meetings of Gatwick Airport Limited's Ground Noise Committee and Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group (NATMAG) would take place on Thursday 17 February 2011 at 9.30 a.m. and 11.00 a.m. respectively.

Chairman