

# UKACCs CHAIR'S REPORT & KEY ISSUES

## Overview of UKACCs work in 2022-23

1. Over the past year ACCs have seen their airports return to business as usual, with traffic returning to near 2019 levels, as they recover from the impact of the pandemic. Passenger traffic across the European airport network increased by +12.1% in Q3 compared to the same period last year. Despite persistently higher air fares and enduring pressures from rising inflation, the summer months showed a very robust performance overall.
2. The UK's airports have however continued to face exceptional challenges with airports, airlines and ground handlers struggling to recruit staff quickly enough leading to a shortage of personnel which has impacted on passenger service standards. Additionally, strike action by French air traffic controllers caused cancellations and delays for months, and flights over France to destinations such as Spain and Portugal were affected. The air traffic control environment has also posed many challenges as Europe's airspace remained constrained and impacted by the Ukraine war, which further added to the delays. There was also the NATS outage at the start of the peak summer which took several days for flights schedules to return to normal.
3. It has been a busy year for UKACCs keeping its members updated on changing circumstances and new policy and strategy developments alongside its work to take forward the UKACCs Work Programme Objectives agreed at the UKACCs Annual Meeting last year. Greater focus has been given to ACC best practice as well as building on UKACCs' positive relationships with officials at the DfT, CAA and ACOG. The Annual Meeting enables UKACCs to collectively agree how it responds to changing circumstances and, importantly, how it continues to move forward.
4. As UKACCs' work and the amount of support UKACCs provides to its membership is based on the resources and funds available, it is very limited in what it can achieve with the available funding. The UKACCs Secretariat has operated with reduced resource over the past 8 months as Frank Evans, UKACCs Secretariat, had been unwell and sadly passed away this month. UKACCs will greatly miss his expertise, wise counsel, friendship and good humour.

## UKACCs Working Group

5. I am very grateful to the work of the UKACCs Working Group and the time its members devote to the work of UKACCs. The Working Group has met once since the last Annual Meeting in 2022, with the task of:
  - reviewing UKACCs' financial position and membership subscriptions
  - considering the outcomes of the DfT's information gathering exercise
6. The work on reviewing UKACCs' future funding model and options to explore the implications of offering other non UKACCs ACCs' membership, or associate membership, is on-going. It is important to ensure that the implications on staff resource to support a wider membership and the membership fees for all are proportionate, workable and sustainable into the future.
7. The Working Group agreed the membership scale of subscriptions for the current financial year which saw an alteration of the subscription bands for airports handling under 10 mppa by the creation of new bands for airports handling under 2 mppa; and airports handling over 2 mppa but under 6 mppa and a flat rate increase of £100 to all ACCs whose airports handle less than 20 mppa. All membership fees will also now be subject to annual CPI rate increase based on the CPI rate as at 1 April each year.

## DfT's Information Gathering Exercise on ACCs

8. Over the past year UKACCs has reflected on the results of the DfT's information gathering exercise along with the criticisms raised by the AEF (Aviation Environment Federation) about their community members' longstanding [concerns and problems](#) with some ACCs in terms of independence, representation and transparency. The DfT's Final Report on its information gathering exercise was published on 30 March 2023. It is welcome news that UKACCs has been cited in the DfT's Final Report as being a resource for best practice.
9. The Working Group discussed the feedback received from member ACCs alongside the points raised at last year's Annual Meeting when the DfT presented its initial findings of the exercise. Whilst Working Group felt that the current DfT Guidelines for ACCs were helpful in that they recognised that one size did not fit all, they were open to local interpretation with varying best practice standards. The Working Group were of the view that UKACCs has an important role in guiding member ACCs and to be proactive in developing a set of common best practice standards, particularly in terms of transparency. It was also felt that UKACCs should take the lead on any future review of the DfT Guidelines and to advise the DfT on where changes may be needed. Time has therefore been devoted at this year's Annual Meeting for a full discussion on what members would like to see and the scope to introduce common best practice standards for UKACCs member ACCs.
10. As part of this initiative, UKACCs has looked at how visible its member ACCs are to the outside world. The Secretariat undertook a desktop survey of the information that was available online about the work of our ACCs. This revealed a wide range of differing practices in terms of meeting the DfT's expectations for basic transparency of the ACC's contact details and work. The results were shared with all members which was positively received with many airports and ACCs taking action to address shortcomings identified.
11. UKACCs is also keen to hear the views of airports on the value and effectiveness of their ACCs. The DfT wrote to airports at the time of publishing the Final Report advising that it is important for airports to engage fully with their ACCs in considering the outcomes of the Final Report. The letter also stated that "*The Department will now support UKACCs (UK Airport Consultative Committees) in working with its members to identify and prioritise any areas for further consideration arising from this exercise*". UKACCs has for the first time established a positive relationship with the Airport Operators Association (AOA), which is supportive of UKACCs and is keen to raise awareness of our work with their member airports.

## UKACCs' Engagement with Others

12. It is most encouraging that UKACCs' engagement with the DfT, CAA, ACOG and other organisations continues and remains positive and constructive. Our engagement activities over the past year include:
  - Monthly liaison with DfT officials
  - Quarterly liaison with the CAA's Sustainability Team
  - Participation in the DfT's Airspace Noise Engagement Group (ANEG)
  - Participation in the CAA's Community Engagement Group inputting to the development of the Aviation Noise Attitudes Study (ANAS)
  - Participation in the CAA's workshops reviewing CAP1616
  - Participation in ACOG's Community Advisory Panel to input views on the process for the development of the Airspace Masterplan
  - Participation in the joint DfT & CAA Single Design Entity (SDE) Workshop
  - Meeting with the Aviation Environment Federation to discuss community noise groups concerns.
13. UKACCs also hosted at the beginning of the year a virtual information giving session with the CAA's Sustainability Team on its work and those projects of greatest interest to ACCs. That session included updates on on the CAA's new [Sustainability Strategy](#) and areas of work, the

review of engagement and noise complaints handling practices at airports, the ANAS project, the reporting of UK Aviation Environmental Performance and the work of the Environmental Sustainability Panel.

14. Lastly, UKACCs has continued to raise with DfT officials UKACCs' concerns about the disconnect between land use planning and aviation noise which has presented challenges for airports and planners over many years since the planning policy framework was streamlined and the detailed Planning Policy Guidance Note on Planning and Noise (PPG24) was lost. UKACCs continues to encourage its member ACCs and their airports to provide evidence to the DfT of where the current planning framework is not effective in protecting residential properties from the impact of aviation noise. The current DfT review of its noise policies provides an important opportunity to raise concerns and to seek change to bring about improvement to the effectiveness of aviation noise and land-use planning policy and guidance.

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**December 2023**