

Resilience Planning at UK Airports

What this paper is about

Informs delegates of the CAA's guidance issued in 2014 "Passenger welfare at times of major disruption - guidance for UK airports" and the expectation for airports to have in place resilience plans prepared collaboratively with a wide range of stakeholders. It seeks views from member ACCs on the arrangements in place at their airports, areas of best practice and issues of concern.

Points for Discussion

- Whether member ACCs have been involved in the contingency planning arrangements at their airports.
- The role of transport providers in assisting airports recover from major disruption.
- The role of neighbouring airports in handling diverted flights and assisting in recovery of operations.
- Identification of areas of best practice and issues of concern.

Possible Action

- Dependent on the views expressed at the meeting.

Introduction

1. In recent years there have been a number of weather events and other incidents which caused significant disruption and delays at airports and the industry has hit the headlines for the wrong reasons a number of times, for example:

- Global chaos caused by the Eyjafjallajökull ash cloud in spring 2010, followed by major European airports struggling during periods of heavy snowfall later in the year.
- Computer failures at NATS in December 2013 led to the grounding of hundreds of UK flights, while flooding at Gatwick a few weeks later on Christmas Eve seriously disrupted thousands of passengers' travel plans.
- During the 2014 summer holiday season, baggage handling problems at Heathrow and Gatwick caused significant inconvenience and distress to passengers.

2. Such events attracted considerable political interest in aviation's resilience. Three independent reviews of the issue have been published in the last four years: the DfT's reviews of aviation and other transport modes' responses to snow (2010) and other extreme weather events (2014), and the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into events at Gatwick on Christmas Eve 2013 (2014). The Government, the CAA and the airports themselves have conducted reviews into the way in which events are planned for, managed and reviewed.

3. In response to the issues and challenges, the CAA and the Airport Operators Association (AOA) have developed a set of key principles and recommended practices to help airports check they have the right type of procedures and plans in place to deal with disruption, and provide useful suggestions and reassurance as to how airports can plan ahead. This will help ensure that passengers get the outcomes they expect when travelling by air.

4. In 2014, the CAA published CAP 1244 "Passenger welfare at times of major disruption - guidance for UK airports"¹. The CAA has sought to reflect the recommendations made in the Transport Select Committee report² on the events at Gatwick on Christmas Eve in 2013, and the DfT's independent Transport Resilience Review³ published in 2014, in its guidance.

The CAA's Guidance

5. The CAA recognises that the nation's airports vary greatly in terms of their size, capacity, passenger mix, proportion of transfer passengers, and transport and other surrounding infrastructure. It has therefore been careful to focus on core principles that could be applied to all airports – in cooperation with airlines and other stakeholders – to inform their approaches to addressing the risks and impacts of disruption.

6. At Heathrow and Gatwick, which, as large airports with market power, are covered by the Civil Aviation Act 2012 licensing regime and the principles identified the guidance are largely already implemented and resilience planning and regular reviews are required as part of the licence conditions. In line with their licence conditions, both airports published operational resilience plans in October 2014. The guidance is, therefore, mainly intended to support airport boards, management and operational staff at the UK's other large airports (defined as serving over one million passengers a year) where the CAA has no powers to regulate resilience.

7. The CAA has also set out in the guidance the legal responsibility for looking after passengers. The passenger's contract is not with the airport but the airline that has the

¹http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP1244_Passenger_welfare_guidance_for_UK_airports.pdf

²<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmselect/cmtran/956/95602.htm>

³<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-resilience-review-recommendations>

responsibility for looking after them. Under EU Regulation EC261/2004⁴ airlines have specific obligations to passengers whose flights have been disrupted, including the provision of food and drink, the means to contact friends and family, and overnight accommodation (including transport to and from it) if necessary. Under EC261/2004, airlines must give priority to disabled people and PRMs, and unaccompanied children when discharging their responsibilities.

8. The three key areas identified where performance should be improved is first to reduce the number of passengers affected by any major disruption, and then to improve the care given to those passengers that remain stranded at the airport:

- Improved coordination and communication between airports, airlines and ground handlers will help airports **maintain operations** and reduce the number of passengers affected by major disruption.
- Where operations are impacted, helping passengers to make well-informed travel decisions, for instance through providing better information on operations at an earlier stage, will help **avoid stranding passengers** at the airport.
- For those passengers ultimately stranded at the airport, ensuring that airlines **care for passengers** in line with their legal obligations should reduce the degree of discomfort and distress these passengers experience.

9. The guidance therefore encourages as a starting point a clear, jointly agreed view of what all passengers expect when they travel by air, and then identify and address the risks that could prevent their expectations from being met such as:

- Information about the status of their flight
- A clean and comfortable environment to wait in until their flight is ready to depart, with clean and hygienic facilities.
- Access to free drinking water and reasonably priced food.
- The ability to communicate easily, as well as the ability to find out about or rearrange their onward travel arrangements at their destination.
- Accommodation, and transport to and from it, if disruption continues overnight, including being able to return home if practical.
- The ability to easily make a complaint and obtain redress (including financial compensation if appropriate) at a later date, usually once the passenger has completed their journey.
- Confidence that steps will be taken to provide a better experience the next time they fly.

10. Airports, airlines and other service providers must therefore collectively ensure the welfare of passengers in situations of disruption. The CAA's advice is that this is best delivered cooperatively between the organisations and approaches to managing risk (through capital and operational procedures), contingency plans (incorporating command and control arrangements, staff training and qualification, staff availability, facilities and equipment), passenger communications (information about flight status, information about rights to care and assistance), practice events (table top exercises and practice exercises) and learning lessons must be designed to encourage and facilitate such cooperative behaviours.

11. The guidance also states that airport's resilience planning needs to bring together multiple stakeholders, including airlines, travel agents, ground handlers, air traffic controllers, security and border control, caterers, surface transport providers and maintenance services. Most of the time, these organisations interface seamlessly, providing a hassle-free

⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32004R0261:EN:HTML>

experience to the vast majority of the millions of passengers who fly in and out of the UK every year but in times of major disruption all need to play a part in managing the disruption and in the recovery of the airport's operation.

12. As mentioned above both Heathrow and Gatwick airports are required to publish operation resilience plans and review them regularly with all the stakeholders which has included the involvement of the ACC. Delegates are asked to share their experience and involvement with resilience planning at their airports and to highlight areas of best practice and issues of concern. In particular, the way in which member ACCs are involved in the resilience plan preparation process, whether transport providers are included in the planning process (train operators, coach and bus operators, taxi companies, car park operators) and whether neighbouring airports are consulted on contingency arrangements and diversion plans.

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