

AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES' TOP ISSUES DISCUSSED 2021-22

Introduction

1. At this year's Annual Meeting, the recovery of the aviation industry and regional economies around airports from the impact of the pandemic will be a key topic of discussion. With many of the UK's airports experiencing a return to near pre-pandemic traffic levels over the summer months, although demand for flights from mid-September appears to be slowing, airports and the sector faced a raft of challenges and problems impacting on the passenger experience at airports, flight punctuality, resilience and staff resource/recruitment. Recovery and resilience are currently a key focus for the DfT and the CAA.
2. The recovery of airport operations also had an impact on local and regional economies, supply chains and labour markets, consequential impacts on public transport services and demand for services to and from airports, infrastructure investment priorities and on the local environment for communities around airports. Local communities had benefitted from, and got used to, quiet skies, improved air quality, and less congestion on road networks serving airports during the pandemic when travel restrictions were in place.
3. UKACCs members are asked to share the problems experienced at airports and around airport at the Annual Meeting, how any continuing problems are being addressed as well as successes and lessons learned. Some member ACCs have shared in advance of the meeting the top three issues their ACC have discussed over the past year. These are summarised in the table below. Some of the issues shared are common to other member ACC and these have been **highlighted in bold**. These issues include recovery from pandemic, airport staff resource and recruitment, airport expansion and planning processes, sustainability/environmental issues particularly noise disturbance and complaints, surface access issues and airspace modernisation/change. Further contributions to the list of issues will be sought at the meeting. The summary also includes details of ACC meeting arrangements, whether they have returned to in-person meetings, retained virtual meetings and/or holding hybrid meetings or a combination of platforms.
4. The aim of the discussion is to assist UKACCs with developing a UK wide picture and to focus discussion on those matters which would benefit from being raised at national fora, with the DfT, CAA and/or other parties.

Paula Street
UKACCs Secretariat
November 2022

| ACC | Top Issues in 2021/22 | Comments, improvements, resolutions |
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| Aberdeen | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise • Offshore Worker Ticket Changes • Single Ground Handling company <p>Meeting style - Continue to hold hybrid meetings for both in-person and virtual attendance.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aberdeen differs greatly from most airports, due to North Sea Helicopter Traffic. Regular noise issues are received, and the airport have investigated and looked at solutions including data gathering. GA Jets are also causing some issues, but the problem is more that houses built beside the airport suffer noise and as such do not want acoustic mitigating installed etc. • When helicopter flights are delayed, this often impacts travel home. There was a lack of clarity of costs for flight ticket changes / rebooking costs. Although now understood, it still gives rise to issues in having to pay the difference on the day of travel forcing workers to seek an alternative way home (not by air). • AIA only has one Ground Handling Agent, basically if there any company issues / industrial action then effectively about all scheduled flights would be impacted. |
| Belfast City | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rate of return to pre-pandemic business levels • Recruitment of community representatives • Sustainability <p>Meeting style - In the early stages of the pandemic we provided our ACC with regular online and email briefings to update on the emerging situation at GBBCA, moving to 'full' online ACC meetings in March 2021. We held our first in-person meeting in August this year and expect these to continue.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst not yet at 2019 levels, airport is achieving a generally steady increase in business. Actual and projected business levels, including aspects such as staffing, funding, route development and return to pre-pandemic noise levels, are regular ACC agenda items. • This is an ongoing issue, to ensure our membership is representative of all areas of the local community. We have undergone a number of recruitment drives and are currently looking at how we can promote the benefits of involvement in the ACC, including the possibility of involving young people. Any ideas on attracting community representation would be most welcome. • Ongoing development of the Airport's strategy and approach in this area is a continuing issue for discussion and consultation with the ACC, including such aspects as the airport's Sustainability Strategy, environmental performance, Corporate Responsibility measures and in developing a Net Zero Roadmap. |
| Belfast International | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NI protocol and resulting increased costs • Recovery from covid • Staff vacancies resulting in complaints e.g. time taken to deliver luggage. <p>Meeting style - Has resumed in-person meetings</p> | |
| Bristol | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inconsiderate parking around local villages by passengers on roads and laybys | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution: Airport working with Police and North Somerset Council to extend double red lines (no stopping at any time) on main A38 and liaising with the parishes. Then airport have also provided a free 1 hour waiting area on the Southside for taxis and families to drop off/collect passengers. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Night flight complaints • Environmental issues relating to planning applications? • Recruitment challenges | <p>There is also a Transport Forum which brings together all passenger providers serving the airport to work together for better transport links with the airport and reduce car journeys.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) making complaints process easier, team being trained up to respond to all complaints within timely manner. Tracking aircraft complaints and ensuring they are following correct course. (ii) Growth of future technology (electric / hydrogen / autonomous vehicles) to reduce the Carbon Footprint and a sustainable future. Introducing quieter more efficient aircraft to reduce noise / carbon fuels etc... • Resolution: ongoing. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolution: Numerous Job Fairs held and work ongoing. |
| East Midlands | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise - especially from Cargo operators and training flights • Post-Covid recovery operations: EMA appears to be heading in the right direction in terms of its post covid recovery. It did not experience some of the issues highlighted in the press save that recruitment was a challenge specifically security and car parks. • Environmental pollution: An issue arose with pollution in the River Trent raised by non-committee stakeholders. The issue was reported in the national press and involved the Environment Agency given alleged permit breaches. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mitigation measures have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) New noise monitor; (ii) Additional penalties for QC4 aircraft (the increase in cargo operations over the pandemic, and the shedding of 747 aircraft by some of the commercial airlines meant that these are available cheaply to certain cargo operators looking to expand to meet demands); (iii) Increased engagement between the airport and carriers to nudge reductions of noisier aircraft; (iv) Engagement between the airport and those that operate training flights to find ways of operating that create the least disturbance to communities. • Measures have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Additional reporting on recruitment (including challenges faced) and resilience; (ii) Presentations of steps taken to improve the airport experience which includes measures to help those with restricted movement and vulnerabilities that may require enhanced support; (iii) The airport has plugged some of the gaps in passenger-facing roles with volunteers from the local community ("Friends of EMA") and also Customer Cadets (local students with an interest in working in the industry). These roles augment the airport's permanent customer ambassadors. • Mitigation measures have included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Creation of a working group to discuss the issues, engage with the airport and report back to the committee; (ii) Direction intervention by me to make arrangements for meetings between affected parties and airport staff managing the issue to include site visits; (iii) Better and more regular reporting from the airport to include steps taken to mitigate and regulate the issue. (iv) Water quality and pollution have become standing items on the relevant committee agenda. |

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| | <p>Meeting Style - In-person meetings have resumed for the full ACC meetings but sub-committee and strategic reference group meetings have remained virtual.</p> | |
| Farnborough | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airspace Change Implementation 18 months ago • The introduction of new rules on Public Safety Zones. • Environmental protests. <p>Meeting Style - Has resumed in person meetings</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The implementation of the Airspace Change introduced 18 months ago made significant amendments to the routings in and out of the airport. We are now in the midst of a Post Implementation Review (PIR) and this is causing some frustrations with our members because they will not be given an opportunity to comment on the new routings until towards the end of the process. |
| Glasgow Prestwick | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication of ACC meeting minutes • Lack of volunteers and lack of diversity on the committee. • Handling commercially sensitive information <p>Meeting style – resumed in-person meetings in June and plans to continue on this basis.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeated failure of the airport to update ACC details on their website, including minutes of meetings. The ACC has invested time and money to design its own website but has not yet gone live because our preference remains to get the airport to cooperate. • We approached a variety of local organisations earlier this year with little success but have resisted the temptation to advertise in the local press because of concerns this might only attract troublemakers. • is not really an “issue” as such, but the airport CEO has shared some commercially sensitive information on a strictly confidential basis with a firm request details are not shared outside the committee and not recorded in the minutes. This has enabled some good discussions. |
| Leeds Bradford | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Covid recovery • Noise • On track flying • Airspace change • Airport development | |
| Liverpool John Lennon | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery from pandemic • Noise complaints | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential staff shortages after the pandemic were planned for in advance which at the time may have been a risk but it paid off as passengers returned. The main issue is financial pressure on the business as they are still in ‘recovery mode’ and do not expect to recover until late 2023. This has put pressure on budgets which means they aren’t able to fill ‘back of house/administration’ roles that were lost during the pandemic. • Frequent complainers about noise are tolerated though they skew the figures. If they get into thousands a month, as has happened, we separate them out and report them as mere numbers. It would be interesting to see how other airports deal with them. |

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| <p>London Gatwick</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery from the pandemic. Particularly in relation to the passenger experience and issues around check in, security and baggage. • Airport Expansion & DCO preparation. • Noise Envelope Group work (linked to the above). • Airspace Modernisation <p>Meeting Style – in person meetings resumed for alternate meetings of GATCOM/GATCOM Steering Group. PAG resumed in person meetings. Other airport sub-groups are currently virtual but there are suggestions to return to in-person meetings</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACC Passenger Advisory Group (PAG) have monitored this closely and been very present at the airport to witness and follow up with GAL. It has been the main topic of the last 2 PAG meetings. GALs cap on summer numbers does seem to have managed it to some extent but it continues to be of concern to PAG. • GATCOM has received presentations from PINS as well as regular updates from GAL as the process progresses. The next meeting will discuss whether GATCOM want to register as an interested party and therefore respond to the DCO. As well as being on the main GATCOM agenda, the Chairman has also had 1:1 briefings from GAL and with Local Authority officers on the issue. • This has been met with some frustration, mainly by the Environment and Amenity groups but also Local Authorities, that GAL are simply informing rather than consulting. GATCOM Chairman and Vice Chairman have been heavily involved on both sides – GAL and the Environment & Amenity Groups and trying to discuss and resolve issues. • The airport has held several engagement sessions with key stakeholders and communities, involving representation from the ACC. The complexity of the project poses challenges, but engagement has been effective in developing understanding and raising awareness. The ACC has also been updated on ACOG's masterplan preparation. |
| <p>London Heathrow</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery from pandemic | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heathrow, along with a number of other UK airports, experienced significant levels of passenger disruption from Easter into early Summer because of staff shortages. The daily PAX CAP, bought in voluntarily by HAL, whilst causing political and commercial tension, mitigated much of that and we have seen a slow but steady improvement in key passenger metrics. However, staffing is still an issue, and a tight labour market means that will not end anytime soon. Recruitment problems remain despite higher unemployment rates in West London than in March 2020. Heathrow commits to paying the London Living Wage but clearly more needs to be done to recruit faster and reduce churn - there is evidence of new recruits moving on to non-airport opportunities. <p>ACC action: Passenger Services Group worked closely with HAL on service issues, and issues around communication of cap policy. Local Recovery Forum working with HAL on immediate, medium and short term issue around skills gap.</p> |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airspace change process • Sustainability / environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complexity and length of CAP1616 has presented technical and community engagement issues. HAL had been behind in process due to COVID but are now catching up. <p>ACC action: raised issue in Open Forum with HAL CEO to understand timing of issue, working with HAL on engagement in Stage 2 and working to explain process and timeline to stakeholders and will ensure Stage 3 consultation is carried out properly and comprehensively.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued challenges around environmental impact of airport - noise, air quality, surface access etc. HAL published their Heathrow 2.0 sustainability plan following consultation with stakeholders. <p>ACC action: working on these issues across forums and will have an official role in scrutinising 2.0 plans.</p> |
| London Luton | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise – especially in relation to the planning request to expand from 18 to 19 mppa and the resulting public enquiry • Airspace Change / Modernisation • Surface Access – relating to both the expansion plans. <p>Meeting Style - Has maintained virtual meetings (MS Teams) - not least because it is more eco-friendly!</p> | <p>The community groups dominate the debate. The economic benefits of the Airport are brushed aside, and the communities are now using climate change as a strong reason for limiting growth. There is little consideration of the Passenger Experience – which at Luton is proving to be really quite good (but those negatively impacted by the airport don't want to hear that)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the planning request to expand from 18 to 19 mppa and the resulting public enquiry (which is ongoing) and relating to the owner's DCO application to expand to 32 mppa over the next 20 years or so. From a broader UKACCS perspective the issue would seem to hinge on government policy – is aviation supposed to expand or contract? • Airspace Change / Modernisation (as it is the fastest route to alleviating the noise situation for many) – general disappointment that this is all taking too long. |
| London Stansted | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery off the airport post pandemic. • Surface access. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stansted has fared well resulting in traffic levels reaching 90% of 2019 levels. This has been against a number of challenges especially recruitment. Looking ahead to 2023 the Committee has stressed the need for the airport to be adequately resourced. • Surface access has also been a matter of concern. In particular whilst bus services have gradually returned to 2019 levels, train services have not. The Stansted Express currently operates an average of two serviceman hour compared with four pre pandemic. The Cross Country service has also proved to be very unreliable. Representations have been made to both train operators and the Committee has urged the airport to lobby the Department for Transport. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental Updates • STACC Website • Airport Management Restructure <p>STACC meetings have been held on a hybrid basis - part virtual and part physical. This has probably resulted in greater attendance but lacked personal engagement.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee has also received regular environmental updates (including on Jet Zero). • STACC is also undertaking work to revamp its website. This will include working with the local college to obtain a younger perspective. • The MAG airport group has recently undergone a management restructure which has resulted in the three airports being given local responsibility. |
| <p>London Southend</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recovery from pandemic • Impact of loss of contract and lack of plane movements • Environmental issues <p>Meeting Style - Has returned to in-person meetings</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of activity at the Airport which now means no passenger traffic over the winter. • Impact on the local employment situation. • As the taxi runway close to residential properties. |