

EDINBURGH AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE.

Minutes of the 198th meeting held on Monday 8th November 2021 via Zoom.

Present Robert Carr (Chair)
Janice Hogarth (Secretary)
Gordon Dewar (Chief Executive EAL)
Gordon Robertson (Communications Director EAL)
Greg Maxwell (Head of Corporate Affairs)
Donald Spencer The Consumers Association
Kate Watt Ratho & District Community Council
Alexia Haramis Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce
Cllr Dave Dempsey Fife Council
Cllr Tom Conn West Lothian Council
John Howison Cramond & Barnton Community Council
Cllr Kevin Lang City of Edinburgh Council
Alan Mitchell Fife Chamber of Commerce
Adam Cumming Edinburgh Airport Amenities Group
David Dunphy Frequent Flyer representative
Lindsay Cole Edinburgh Airport Noise Advisory Board
Ken McNab SPAA
Anna Herriman Sestrans
David Hull Kirkcaldy Community Council

Apologies Cllr Carol Hamilton Scottish Borders Council
Cllr Russell Imrie Midlothian Council
Sandy Leggett Air Traffic Services
Frazer McKinstry Edinburgh Airport Operators Committee
Sandy Smart STUC
Nada Shawa Edinburgh Airport Accessibility Forum
Cllr John McMillan
Gary Harrison Police Services Scotland

1. Welcome

Robert Carr opened the remote meeting being held by Zoom, adding a warm welcome to all including some observers who had joined the meeting. Robert Carr recorded thanks to Julian Slatter who had served on the committee for a number of years and advised the meeting that he would be replaced by Jimmy Martin of Jimmy Martin Travel.

Robert Carr then proceeded to advise the members of EACC of the dates for the 2022 meetings which it was hoped would see the committee revert to meeting in person at the Marriott.

The dates for the meeting would be Monday 7th February / Monday 9th May / Monday 8th August / Monday 7th November.

2. The minutes of the previous meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of 16th August 2021 were approved

3. Other matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising

4. Chief Executive's Report (EAL)

The CEO Report from EAL for the previous quarter had been circulated to EACC members in advance of the meeting and Gordon Dewar referred to the slides on his report.

Passenger traffic was still down by about 50% but he added that the airport was half way to recovery with domestic traffic creating the best increase. The relaxation in testing had seen a good response with passenger numbers climbing but it is still a long way off being normal.

There had been some good announcements recently surrounding new routes which showed the confidence in the Edinburgh market. Engagement with Scottish Government via the Aviation Working Group which Gordon chaired was working well with some success and the ongoing pressures were resulting in more alignment for a four nations approach. There was a need to keep this pressure up and criticism was also levelled at the UK Government.

Gordon asked how the Passenger Locator Form (PLF) could be removed, testing further reduced, treatment of unvaccinated passengers reviewed and much more but he added that there needed to be a better plan rather than all the changes given with only 1 or 2 days' notice. Ultimately there was a need to get rid of restrictions as it was now looking like the fact that it would be late 2023/2024 for flights to return to 2019 levels.

Many long-haul airlines will not resume flying until Spring 2022.

Ken McNab asked Gordon about the creation of Edinburgh as a hub airport which would reduce emissions and encourage more direct flights which would bring environmental benefits but Gordon responded that it is the airlines who decide on where they want to base their aircraft and create hubs.

Kevin Lang asked about the mix of traffic with inbound v outbound and Gordon Dewar pointed out that they only had accurate data for outbound and that there was no reliable data for inbound. In theory routes need to be supported on a 50/50 basis but currently nearly all traffic was domestic as the UK was not seen as an attractive place to visit with all the restrictions and testing in place.

Capital Investment

Currently the Airport was now back to breaking even and Gordon Dewar talked about the projects that had been completed such as the IT upgrade and the new baggage belts which now meant that bags were fully automated which in turn would increase reliability on the delivery of bags, speed up the delivery of arrival bags and also reduce costs.

A general aviation terminal was now offering private jets a VIP service and this was proving popular. There was also the solar farm which being created with assistance from Scottish Government. The other new project would be the new scanner in security which would allow passengers to travel through without having to remove anything such as liquids etc.

Community Fund

Gordon Robertson talked about how to refocus and allocate funds. EAL had opened up the charity of the year and were now considering options and looking to support locally based charities. Gordon Robertson also added that the work with schools was now restarting

Surface Access

Gordon Robertson talked about the struggle with taxi drivers due to the current shortage of drivers.

Noise Report

There had been a new graph recently which showed that 78% of complaints had come from 5 people. He added that there had been a number of comments in relation to helicopters but these are private touring helicopters offering sightseeing trips which the airport has no control over.

Route Development

Gordon Dewar talked of the new services that would be starting such as Westjet to Canada, Air Baltic to Riga and Virgin Atlantic to both Barbados and Orlando. Delta would be returning next year as well as United but he noted that British Airways were very slow with upscaling their services and that Emirates had still not advised their date for resuming flights to Dubai.

Customer Support

The launch of the new customer support centre was proving to be successful with the volume of enquiries growing and the feedback had been positive. Gordon Robertson advised EACC that Jessica Briggs has been appointed as the new head of Customer services and she will take up her post on the 6th December and so she will attend and report her progress at the next meeting.

Gordon Robertson commented that the insourcing of PRM had been a positive change with the aim of giving the passengers a better experience. EAL were recruiting people and training them to be multi skilled. They had invested in IT systems which had been the main criticism in the CAA accessibility report and so good progress had been achieved and was ongoing.

5. Presentation on AOA Report on Sustainability – Henk Van Klaveren

Henk Van Klaveren, Head of Public Affair for the Airport Operators Association (AOA) gave a presentation on their recent report on sustainability and decarbonisation (copy of presentation slides already circulated)

Henk talked about the need for a recovery plan which covered three main areas including support for airports through the continued restrictions, reversing the decision on ending VAT on duty free sales in airports and boosting aviation recovery through the support of a 50% reduction in APD.

The recovery in air traffic should take into account the aims of reaching net zero by 2050 and he noted that Edinburgh were in fact aiming for this by 2030. Between 2010 and 2019 emissions had been halved but this needed to continue with the reduction of direct emissions wherever possible with reductions in usage and the use of different sources of energy such as the use of solar panels.

Some emissions are not controllable by the airports directly such as passengers and staff travelling to and from the airports, ground handlers and deliveries but best practice should be considered wherever possible.

Aeronautical emissions can be improved via newer fleets of aircraft, reduction in use of engine use on the ground and air space change review as well as obviously the use of cleaner or sustainable fuel.

There could be a trade off on noise reduction v fuel emissions and Lindsay Cole commented that this could mean that a slower climb could create noise over a large area. This would be a local decision involving the airport, the airline and the community.

Sustainable fuels involves a variety of options with consideration to aircraft running on electric and hydrogen options or a combination or hybrid alternative.

Sustainable fuels from household waste is being delivered but some countries such as Finland don't want to use it. There is also an option of recycled carbon but this is currently limited in production.

Henk showed the roadmap of the places where sustainable fuels would be produced with about 14 different plants being ready by 2035 and it was agreed that Grangemouth would be a great option in Scotland but would require Government support.

Some airlines were already trialling different options with Loganair introducing electric flights on some island flights to the Orkneys, British Airways trialling some domestic flights using fuel created from household waste and Air Canada using some new aircraft using hydrogen.

6. UKACC Updates

Robert Carr reminded the meeting that the UKACC AGM would be held remotely on the 18/19th November when Colin Flack, who had previously spoken to the EACC, would be re-elected to serve another two years as Chairman.

The UKACC had forwarded a questionnaire to all ACCs to complete regarding the DfT guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees moving forwards. Robert Carr advised that the details of the EACC responses would be circulated to EACC members for any further comment.

Robert Carr mentioned the ongoing distribution of the UKACC weekly Bulletins which gave a full overview on what is happening across the UK in the aviation world. (thanks to Janice Hogarth for forwarding these and other notifications from UKACC)

7. EANAB Report

Lindsay Cole advised the meeting on the progress of the EANAB Strategic Aims from 2021 – 2024 which had already been circulated to members of EACC. This document would cover all aspects of their workplan and the way forward.

Lindsay Cole added that the Noise Action Plan for Edinburgh Airport should be produced in February with delivery and consultation with EANAB

Dave Dempsey asked for some background on the panel to which Robert Carr noted that the details would be produced in the report but added that there had been 40 meetings held so far during the process creating the review by the Edinburgh Airport Noise Review Panel which was formed of EANAB members as well as Robert Carr, Kevin Lang and Janice Hogarth from EACC and Gordon Robertson from EAL

8. Update on report from EANRP

Kevin Lang commented on the progress of the Edinburgh Airport Noise Review Panel which he advised the meeting that it was at the last stages in finalising their report which he hoped would be produced prior to Christmas.

Kevin Lang advised the meeting that the panel was trying to position the report to acknowledge that there had been progress within EANAB since the panel had been established. Kevin Lang also again reiterated that the panel would only be making recommendations that would equip the panel to be hopefully more successful.

He added that no stone had been left unturned with the review and all possible aspects had been considered including whether EANAB should continue. It had been unanimously agreed by the panel that it should continue and it was hoped that the recommendations would be carefully considered.

9. Presentation on Scottish Government Consultation on Aviation – Gary Cox

Gary Cox advised the meeting that the current consultation required completion by the 21st January 2022 but he asked members to note that it was not meant to be an aviation strategy as this would follow on after the consultation.

It recognised the importance to the economy of air travel but asked the question of how do we get the benefits to the economy whilst keeping to net zero targets.

It acknowledges what is already being done but asks what else can be done to help accelerate progress.

Sustainable aviation fuel is expensive and there is a need to accelerate agendas for flights, ground, access etc.

International connectivity is key and the papers asks how we can return to pre pandemic levels and grow routes and connections. But we also need to take into account the question of whether the priority markets are still the same ? there is the need for consideration on flexibility here.

It is beneficial for aircraft to be based in Scotland but how should this be incentivised ? countries such as Canada are using new generation aircraft which have much lower emissions so should we be incentivising airlines here to do the same ?

Gary Cox continued by talking about domestic connectivity by air v rail and added that air travel was sometimes cleaner than travel by ferry, whilst travel by air was also necessary for longer journeys within the UK as rail was not always a realistic option.

The Highland and Islands services were important lifeline services but they needed support and although there had been recent good news re APD this would not be happening till 2023.

Gary Cox advised the meeting that he would be happy to follow up after the consultation had been completed to talk further to EACC.

It was agreed that a small working group should be formed of EACC members to create a response to this paper from EACC whilst recognising that some individuals may prefer to send their own individual response. (**Action : Robert Carr and Janice Hogarth to invite EACC members to join the workgroup**) Dave Dunphy & Adam Cumming had noted interest at the meeting.

Anna Herriman commented that Grangemouth was a centre of excellence for the oil industry and that potentially it would be a good site for creating a centre for sustainable fuel.

It was suggested that Andy Jefferson should attend the February meeting to talk about sustainable aviation fuel (Action : arrange this for February meeting)

Ken McNab commented that travel agents were not involved in this process and suggested that they could maybe help with increasing the load factors on the smaller island flights but where was the support for this area of the market. Gary Cox agreed to set up a meeting with Ken McNab and Janice Hogarth will liaise with this.

10. Rolling Action Plan

This would now be created for 2022 meeting

11. AOCB

Dave Dempsey commented that the council elections in May could have an effect on the attendance at the May meeting and this was duly noted.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 1230