

**BIRMINGHAM AIRPORT - AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE  
1 SEPTEMBER 2022 AT 1.30 PM**

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Present: Mr Colin Flack OBE – Chairman

In attendance from Birmingham Airport Company:

Nick Barton	-	Chief Executive
Andy Holding	-	Corporate Responsibility Manager
Tom Denton	-	Head of Sustainability
Rosie Bishop	-	Sustainability Specialist
Jon Davies	-	Energy and Carbon Manager
Simon Evans	-	Head of Corporate Affairs & Marketing
Ed Kibblewhite	-	Accessibility Manager (to September 2022)
Arron Corless	-	Accessibility Manager (from October 2022)
Stuart Haseley- Nerjup	-	Head of Customer Experience

In attendance from Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council:

Mr L Stevenson	-	Representing the ACC Secretariat
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Balsall Parish Council	-	Cllr K Tindall
Birmingham City Council	-	Cllr C Green
Castle Bromwich Parish Council	-	Cllr J Macdonald
Catherine de Barnes Residents Association	-	Mr D Cuthbert
Chelmsley Wood Town Council	-	Cllr S MacDonald
Consumers Association	-	Mr T Baker
Fordbridge Town Council	-	Cllr D Cole
Hampton in Arden Parish Council	-	Cllr D Sandells
Hampton in Arden Society	-	Mrs J Hilton
Kingshurst Parish Council	-	Cllr D Cole (substitute)
Shard End Communities	-	Mrs M Ball
Sheldon Residents Association	-	Mr M Kennett
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	-	Cllr R Grinsell
Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council	-	Cllr J Butler

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Passengers Representative and Vice-Chairman	- Mrs R Tyler
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	- Cllr E Lee (substitute)
Warwickshire County Council	- Cllr M Watson
Warwick District Council	- Cllr G Illingworth

Apologies were received on behalf of: -

ABTA	- Mrs S Foxall
Barston Parish Council	- Mr D Elliott
Berkswell Parish Council	- Cllr R Lloyd
Bickenhill & Marston Green Parish Council	- Cllr J Horton
Birmingham Airport Company	- Nikki Bains
Birmingham City Council	- Cllr T Huxtable
Knowle Society	- Mrs E Baker
North Warwickshire Area Committee of Parish Councils	- Cllr R Habgood
Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council	- Cllr P Kaur
Wychwood Club	- Mr G Heaps

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS BY THE CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman welcomed Members of the Committee and representatives from the Airport Company. Apologies were as noted by the Secretary and the Airport Company.

**RESOLVED**

That, the Chairman's welcome and recorded apologies be noted.

**2. CHAIRMAN'S UPDATE**

The Chairman provided his regular update to the Committee on current industry issues and his role as Chairman of UKACC's. Headline issues this time included:

- The outcomes of the February 2022 DfT Survey – "Information gathering exercise with Airport Consultative Committees and similar organisations" (which had been expected) had now been delayed and would likely be reported to the ACC at its next meeting in December.

**RESOLVED**

That the Chairman's update be received and noted.

**3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING & MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on 9 June 2022, was submitted.

**Commercial Helicopters**

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The Airport Company (Andy Holding) - updated the Committee on enquiries made to Air Traffic Control regarding a perceived increase in commercial helicopter activity. ATC had now advised that there had not been any notable increase (although the recent good weather may have given rise to a greater number of utility network surveys). ATC did not keep year-on-year statistics so annual comparisons could not be made. The Committee noted that most helicopters operated on visual flight rules so they were not flying within the local noise abatement procedures.

Hampton in Arden Parish Council (Cllr D Sandells) – acknowledged the response that had been obtained and highlighted, again, the noise and disturbances caused by helicopter activities overflying local communities. Cllr Sandells stated that there was no complaint against either the police or other emergency helicopters; more so the other commercial helicopter usage which should have some form of control for both their arrival and departure routes in his view. Cllr Sandells requested that the issue be kept under close review and, additionally, asked if ATC could now begin to compile local data on commercial helicopter operations. The Airport Company (Andy Holding) undertook to follow up the supplementary enquiries with ATC and report back.

The Chairman – highlighted that one of the noise groups which the DfT hosted nationally now had a much keener formal interest in “other” sources of noise, whether that be from helicopters, private light aircraft or drones. Those issues were now beginning to get more formal attention by the DfT, as nuisance noise originating from the above sources was currently outside of the control of local airports but still had an effect on surrounding local communities.

#### **Night Flying Policy Review**

The Chairman – advised the Committee that, following the agenda item at the last meeting, a number of expressions of interest had now been received from ACC Members to establish the Working Group which would now begin to take forward the above Review.

#### **RESOLVED**

That, subject to the matters arising as highlighted in the preamble above, the Minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a correct record.

#### **4. PRE-SUBMITTED QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE & MATTERS ARISING**

The Committee was advised that there were no pre-submitted questions on this occasion.

#### **RESOLVED**

That the agenda item be noted.

#### **5. AIRPORT ACTIVITIES REPORT**

The Airport Company (Nick Barton) - presented the new format of the Airport Activities report for the period April to June 2022. The report set out quarterly updates on the following matters:

- Passenger Statistics.
- ATM's
- Aviation Development.
- Key Stakeholder Engagement.
- Complaints Statistics.

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- PRM Performance.
- Customer Satisfaction.
- Social Media.
- Security Wait Times.
- Immigration Performance.
- Baggage Delivery Performance.
- Cleaning Performance.
- On-time Turnaround Performance.

**General Updates**

When introducing the report, Mr Barton drew the Committee's attention to a number of additional headline issues. In summary, this included:

- May and early June had given rise to some operational challenges; the recovery of passenger demand had been great and the deployment of trained, screened and security-cleared staff was still ongoing at that time. Long queues were therefore evident during the morning periods especially. In the main, passenger good-will was evident during those times where delays were being encountered.
- Some media coverage during those months and into the early part of the Summer had caused unnecessary stress and anxiety to travelling passengers. Some passengers, to date, were still not following the advice of their airlines and were arriving far too early for flights.
- A number of operational resource factors that had been anticipated to improve, did, resulting in a much improved passenger experience throughout June and a very stable service from July onwards with much improved queue times.
- The performance of the business had continued to improve. Business risk had also lessened in the recent months and the business was again profitable. Passenger numbers for June, July and August was reported as being in excess of 1M per month and, increasingly, those passengers had a more positive experience when travelling through the airport (those numbers were 83% of the pre-Covid comparison by equivalent month).
- The airline community were also reported to be in a strong position and the Committee was reminded that Flybe had returned as an operator during the pandemic which had been very welcome.
- An area of business weakness was reported as the operational challenges to service Passengers of Reduced Mobility (PRM's) which had been significant in recent months. Outside of Heathrow, Birmingham Airport had the greatest percentage number of PRM's per 10,000 passengers. Given the negative media reporting for queue lengths, that had created a 42% increase in demand for PRM services from passengers worrying about queue times. The Airport Company was assessed on the delivery of its PRM services by the CAA and performance was still currently under the benchmark of 97% of all PRM passengers being met within 20 minutes of their aircraft arriving (performance was currently at 93% and improving).
- Summer performance and business recovery, overall, was good for all UK airports including Birmingham. The future outlook for the industry as a whole was equally confident and optimistic, even when allowing for the impacts of the cost of living crisis.
- Winter operations, planning and training were now all being readied.

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- Staff recruitment for Summer 2023 was continuing and interest in employment at airports was presently strong and employment applications had returned to pre-Covid levels which was positive.
- Environmental issues remained of key importance to the business and the Committee was reminded of the Airport Company's strategic direction and commitments, particularly working towards net-zero carbon emissions by 2033.
- Security improvements and investment was also underway which would allow the business to meet the deadline of 1 June 2024, where new requirements for cabin baggage screening (Standard 3) would take effect. That investment would improve the overall passenger experience and would sit alongside the construction and commissioning of a new Security Hall; work on that would begin in the coming months.
- Passenger terminal escalators would also be replaced with large capacity lifts in parallel with the construction of the new Security Hall facility.

### **Discussion Points**

Chelmsley Wood Town Council (Cllr S MacDonald) – highlighted from recent personal experiences that the PRM service for passengers had been poor due to the limited number of assistance staff initially available. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) acknowledged the concerns raised and apologised for the poor passenger experience. Mr Barton advised that PRM assistance services had now improved and 164 staff were now operating in that service area. Aircraft “Ambulift” operators had also now been recruited; previously as passenger numbers began to return, the Airport Company had struggled to recruit those specialist staff and that, alone, had caused some very regretful delays in assisting that category of passenger.

Fordbridge Town Council (Cllr D Cole) – asked for a view on whether or not the cost of living crisis would have an impact on the business in 2023, and, if any contingency plans were in place to mitigate. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that it was too early to say at this point in time although forward-bookings on car parking and early advanced information from airlines gave expectations that 2023 would not be significantly affected. It was anticipated that travellers would alter their habits rather stop travelling completely (i.e. holidaying for a shorter period or staying in different accommodation to reduce the overall cost of their holiday). It was, however, acknowledged that as the 2023 Summer season became nearer, some holiday makers might indeed cancel holidays due to affordability although the likelihood of that wouldn't be known until nearer the time.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (Cllr J Butler) – sought further details on route development given the impact of current and future fuel prices. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that route development was in hand. Services to New York, for example, were expected to restart as the business case was incredibly strong although there were a number of operational factors as to why that route had not already restarted e.g. delays in the delivery of new aircraft to potential operators. With regard to routes to Qatar, the Committee was advised that discussions had already taken place with Qatar Airways with regard to the restarting of that route, although some operational issues pertaining to their aircraft fleet still needed to be resolved. Again, the economics for that route were excellent. With regard to Emirates, it was reported that the airline was performing exceptionally well at Birmingham (passengers and freight) and the A380 was also expected to return in the coming months in light of the ongoing strong passenger demand and future anticipated growth.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (Cllr R Grinsell) – commented on the pricing of holidays for the Summer 2023 season. Cllr Grinsell also highlighted the new security screening equipment that was being installed and requested further clarification as to how

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the current limitations for liquids in hand language might change. In response, the Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that the imaging of new equipment was significantly more powerful and, similarly to hold luggage screening, the chemical constituents of your hand luggage would now be scanned in greater detail and a risk algorithm used to determine if a security risk was likely. The new equipment also meant that hand luggage would be able to contain single liquids in a higher volume than 100ml.

Hampton in Arden Parish Council (Cllr D Sandells) – asked if rainwater was collected on site and re-used for, e.g., flushing toilets and other uses. The Airport Company (Tom Denton) advised that future capital works to the terminal buildings would explore the feasibility of having such systems in place and, for other future works, each project would then be assessed on a case by case basis.

Catherine de Barnes Residents Association (Mr D Cuthbert) – highlighted that he had flown, personally, with Jet2 on three recent occasions and complimented that airline on their standards of customer service. Mr Cuthbert also asked if the significant rise in the demand for PRM services was directly attributable to the media reports on passenger queuing in former months. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that it was likely to have had an impact at that time. The quality of PRM services for passengers was reported to have vastly improved in recent months and that level of service was expected to be maintained going forwards.

Passengers Representative and Vice-Chairman (Mrs R Tyler) – highlighted the expectations of passengers when using the new security equipment once it was commissioned. Mrs Tyler highlighted the scenario of baggage being scanned sooner than passengers, resulting in a passenger potentially collecting the wrong hand luggage by mistake. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that the new system meant that baggage did not need to be repacked, post scanning. Throughput of passengers would also be increased by additional archway scanners to avoid delays in passengers being reunited with their scanned baggage.

**RESOLVED**

That, the contents of the Airport Activities Report for the period April to June 2022, be received and noted.

**6. SUSTAINABILITY REPORT**

The Airport Company (Tom Denton, Jon Davies and Rosie Bishop) presented the Sustainability Report for the period April to June 2022. The report set out quarterly updates on the following matters:

- Sustainability Update.
- Noise Violations.
- Night Flying Policy.
- Engine Ground Running.
- Air Traffic.
- Aircraft Activity Complaints.
- Air Quality.
- Waste (Recycled).
- Energy.

In addition to the above, the Committee's attention was also drawn towards an update regarding track keeping and its associated data which included a PowerPoint presentation.

**Discussion Points**

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Warwickshire County Council (Cllr M Watson) – highlighted that the area of Warwickshire which he represented was affected by aircraft operations using Runway 33. Perception was that aircraft were either flying too low or off-track when in fact they were not. Three case studies had been undertaken to support this. The Airport Company (Nick Barton) advised that, currently, load factors on departing flights were a lot higher than normal which required more power on departure (thus elevated aircraft noise levels too). It was expected that may well settle down in the coming months to more typical levels.

Birmingham City Council (Cllr C Green) – highlighted the energy and carbon section of the report and asked what proportion of the Airport Company's energy usage did 1.3 megawatts of anticipated electricity generation represent as a percentage to the Airports overall power requirements. The Airport Company (Jon Davies) advised that 1.3 megawatts were in the region of 5% of the Airport's annual electricity requirements.

**RESOLVED**

That, the contents of the Sustainability Report for the period April to June 2022, be received and noted.

**7. PASSENGERS OF REDUCED MOBILITY (PRM) UPDATE - PRESENTATION**

The Airport Company (Ed Kibblewhite) – gave a detailed update on the Airport Company's assisted travel operations to support passengers with reduced mobility. The PowerPoint presentation that the Committee considered included a general overview of operational service delivery; challenges experienced in March/April; corrective actions; improvements in place from May/June onwards; and overall current service performance. Mr Kibblewhite also advised that he would be leaving the Airport Company in the coming weeks and introduced his successor, Arron Corless.

**Discussion Points**

Balsall Parish Council (Cllr K Tindall) – asked what was being done to address unannounced PRM's to help ease the pressure on that particular aspect of the assistance service. The Airport Company (Ed Kibblewhite) advised that unannounced requests were an industry-wide problem and a UK Framework for airlines was being established by the CAA to better promote the booking process and points of contact within airlines.

Chelmsley Wood Town Council (Cllr S MacDonald) – highlighted some of the waiting times she had personally experienced for PRM services when she had recently travelled. Cllr Mac Donald also clarified the PRM booking process when travelling as "flight only" rather than with a package holiday. The Airport Company (Ed Kibblewhite) advised that, if booked, either a tour operator or an airline would transmit those requests for assistance directly to the Airport and flight-only travellers did not need to contact the Airport directly.

Consumers Association (Mr T Baker) – sought clarification on the timing of the forthcoming CAA report on accessibility and what the expectations were for that report. The Airport Company (Ed Kibblewhite) advised that an interim report was expected in the coming weeks and Birmingham Airport was expected to be lower down on that table, based on performance from the early part of the Summer (although measurable improvements had now been made). The Committee was advised that the report was likely to compare Birmingham with other larger airports who did not have the same robust data collection methods. That, in itself, would cause Birmingham Airport to appear lower down in the table of reported performance. The Chairman acknowledged that the current data collection methods were inconsistent across different Airports and the current CAA reporting process appeared unfair. He was aware from his work nationally that the framework was under review to address that area of concern.

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**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**8. PASSENGER EXPERIENCE - PRESENTATION**

The Airport Company (Stuart Haseley-Nerjup) – gave a detailed update on the Airport Company's work towards the passenger experience within its terminal operations. The PowerPoint presentation that the Committee considered included a general overview of passenger satisfaction levels; continuous improvement work; customer complaints; customer contact levels and methods; customer support work; and the new Sense of Place initiative.

**Discussion Points**

Catherine de Barnes Residents Association (Mr D Cuthbert) – highlighted the levels of feedback on a single day for washrooms (317) and security (207) and asked how the Airport Company viewed that level of response. The Airport Company (Stuart Haseley-Nerjup) advised that those numbers represented a great level of response for two service elements in the context of 15,442 completed surveys for all service areas during July (and 48,000 responses in total between April to July). Those numbers gave a clear indication of relevant passenger satisfaction/dissatisfaction and service areas that may need intervention to improve the passenger experience.

Warwick District Council (Cllr G Illingworth) – highlighted that the graph within the presentation could be visualised in a better way to improve the reader's perception of overall performance.

Balsall Parish Council (Cllr K Tindall) – stated that from his own experience, departures from Birmingham Airport were very good. However, on a number of occasions, Cllr Tindall had experienced delays upon arrival. The Airport Company (Stuart Haseley-Nerjup) advised that the Airport acknowledged that arrivals were a very important part of the overall passenger journey and negative passenger experience had a reputational effect on Birmingham Airport. The Airport Company had control over its physical assets and infrastructure to maintain and improve the customer experience upon arrival whilst several other partners and agencies also had to deliver high levels of service to contribute to that overall customer experience (i.e. the airlines, ground handling agents, UK Border Force etc). Cllr Tindall also highlighted that some of the mens washrooms did not present in the best way and that also gave a poor customer experience. The Airport Company (Stuart Haseley-Nerjup) confirmed that there was some known maintenance issues that were being addressed.

Chelmsley Wood Town Council (Cllr S MacDonald) – highlighted that some passengers did not use technology such as chat-bots and care needed to be taken to not digitally exclude some generations of passenger. The Airport Company (Stuart Haseley-Nerjup) confirmed that none of the traditional lines of contact and communication were being switched off.

Warwickshire County Council (Cllr M Watson) – highlighted that modern chat-bots were very good and, in many instances, were very efficient and now indistinguishable from a human being.

**RESOLVED**

That the contents of the report be noted.

**9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The following matter was raised by the Committee:



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Passengers Representative and Vice-Chairman (Mrs R Tyler) – gave the Committee a brief update on recent progress with the Health Forum which had now met. Further detailed updates would be forthcoming at future meetings.

Catherine de Barnes Residents Association (Mr D Cuthbert) – asked if any updates were available, at present, for Castle Hills Farm and any future (residential) development. The Airport Company (Andy Holding) advised that this detail would be sought from the Planning Manager following the meeting.

**RESOLVED**

That the agenda item noted.

**10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The date of the next meeting (AGM) was confirmed as Thursday 01 December 2022 at 13.30hrs and would be held at Diamond House, Birmingham Airport, B26 3QJ.

**RESOLVED**

That the date of the next meeting be agreed and noted.