

Cardiff Airport Consultative Committee– 12th March 2020 – Minutes

Committee Attendees:-

Anthony Ernest	AE	Vale Tourism Association
Brian Acott	BA	St Athan Community Council
Cllr Dr Charles Smith	CS	Bridgend Council
Deb Downen Rees	DBR	Cardiff Airport Chief Executive Officer
Gerallt Marsh	GM	Globaltrek
Helen Tustin	HT	Representing ABTA
Jeffrey James	JJ	Rhoose Community Library
Joann Scott-Quelch	JSQ	Llancarfan Community Council
Cllr Eddie Williams	EW	Vale of Glamorgan Council

Also Present:-

Huw Lewis	HL	Cardiff Airport Chief Financial Officer
Paula Baggot	PB	Cardiff Airport Executive Assistant
Matthew Swindell	MS	Vale of Glamorgan Council - Secretariat

Apologies:-

Cllr Caro Wild	Cardiff Council
Cllr Russell Goodway	Cardiff Council
Cllr David Crompton	St Athan Community Council
Cllr Richard Young	Bridgend Council
Cllr Andrew Parker	Vale of Glamorgan Council

1. Welcome and Introductions

MS called the meeting to order and welcomed the Committee members and attending members of the public to the Cardiff Airport Consultative Committee (ACC) Annual General Meeting (AGM). Committee members noted that Mr. Brian Acott was in attendance, representing Cllr David Crompton from the St Athan Community Council.

It was noted that the Vale of Glamorgan had been successful in bidding to undertake the role of Secretariat for the Airport Consultative Committee as a pilot for the coming year. As such, the Committee would be able to review the role at its next AGM and decide to extend or re-tender as appropriate at that time.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were noted from Councillors Caro Wild, Russell Goodway, David Crompton, Richard Young and Andrew Parker.

3. Appointment of Chairman

MS advised all present that nominations and expressions of interest for the position of Chairman had been requested in advance of the meeting but could also be raised

on the day. In advance of the meeting, expressions of interest had been received from Helen Tustin and Andrew Parker.

As such, Committee members were asked if they would express their preferred candidate by means of secret ballot.

At the conclusion of the ballot, Matthew advised that Helen Tustin had been the successful candidate and appointed as Chair of the Cardiff Airport Consultative Committee.

4. Appointment of Vice-Chairman

MS noted that one expression of interest had been received in advance of the meeting for the position of Vice-Chairman from Anthony Ernest. With no further nominations forthcoming, and agreement from the Committee, Anthony Ernest was noted as the successful candidate and appointed as Vice-Chair of the Cardiff Airport Consultative Committee.

With the agreement of the Committee, MS was asked to continue through the remaining Annual General Meeting items on behalf of the Chair.

5. Declarations of Interest

MS noted declarations of interest as a new standing agenda item, with the Committee's permission, advising that should there any items on future meeting agendas that could compromise any Committee member that it should be declared to ascertain if any Committee member should leave during such items. Committee members wishing advice concerning such interests can contact the Clerk.

6. Minutes of the previous meeting – 29th October 2019

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 29th October 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

7. Timetable of meetings

It was proposed to hold ACC meetings that are open to the public on the following dates:-

- Wednesday the 01st July 2020
- Wednesday the 07th October 2020

Committee Members noted that there was no date in April due to the lateness of the AGM taking place this year, but the schedule would return to four public meetings a year as stated in the Terms of Reference. It was further noted that this did not preclude the need for any special or extraordinary meetings that may be required should circumstances demand.

8. Business Update from Cardiff Airport

8.1 COVID-19 Coronavirus

DBR advised that the airport was aware of the issues concerning COVID-19 at the end of December 2019 / beginning of January 2020 and have been in constant dialogue with Public Health Wales. There is a close relationship and meetings have always been held frequently, but now were focussed more specifically concerning Coronavirus with daily calls now taking place to ensure that the airport follows the latest available guidance.

The pace of change currently had been rapid, with a COBRA meeting being called for this morning where the second stage response was expected as part of the 'delay' phase. The impact of decisions taken at the COBRA meeting on schools, staff, etc. are not yet known, but it was clear there would be significant knock-on effects for everyone.

Separately, the airport had planned to hold an exercise on the 11th March to walk through dealing with a pandemic so this was adapted specifically for Coronavirus and involved all emergency services to ensure all appropriate procedures are in place at the airport, including plans to deal with infected passengers.

Relevant information for the public has been displayed in prominent places across airport facilities, including signposting to all hand-washing facilities. There had been some issues with obtaining hand gel due to current demand. In terms of all current health implications, advice was being followed from all relevant authorities.

Clearly this issue was going to have an impact on the business of the airport, numbers of possible flights and airline share prices which had already felt an impact. Flights were expected to be cancelled, both by the airlines themselves and by passengers as people elected not to travel or following latest guidance. However, aviation is a hugely resilient industry and has dealt with pandemic announcements effectively in the past. There is concern about potential long-term effects on smaller partners and the Department for Transport (DfT) has stated its concern as such. Cardiff Airport is in a strong position to deal with this issue with the backing of Welsh Government and is currently managing the situation to the best of its ability.

8.2 Flybe and Partner Performance

DBR stated that the recent announcement from Flybe had been a blow for the airport as it accounted for around 27% of passengers through the airport last year. Forecasts for the coming year prior to the announcement had been 24%, with Thomas Cook around 13%. As such, it was already recognised there would be a reduction in passenger numbers through the airport next year.

The airport was in a better position than some; Flybe accounted for around 95% of passengers through Southampton and 86% at Belfast City. It was noted however that there was positivity with other airlines coming forward to take on some of the lost routes. Spencer Birns, Cardiff Airport Commercial Director, is in dialogue with other operators such as Loganair on a daily basis. All airlines are naturally conscious of

the latest situation and the current pressures on certain routes and if they can be made to work commercially.

There had been some confusion concerning Eastern Airways and if certain routes had been lost, but this was not correct. Eastern and Blue Islands are both Flybe franchises but looking to be established as independent. Routes are currently operating normally and they are also looking for other route possibilities. Loganair has taken up number of daily services with the intention to increase the frequency of weekly flights.

Qatar are still performing strongly, with a delegation from the airport visiting them and the Qatar team coming here also. There had also been good sessions with freight operators concerning outbound freight.

KLM celebrated 30 years working with Cardiff Airport last year and are still performing strongly with 3 flights to Amsterdam daily. Donald Trump's announcement concerning some flights from Europe will have an effect on KLM.

There are changing factors on a daily basis currently but the services can adapt.

Vueling and Ryanair are continuing to perform strongly.

TUI are adding Sharm El-Sheikh this winter, with a further 16,000 seats added to routes for this coming summer.

Globaltrek have been a fantastic addition to the airport since May and are working well on the south side of the airport.

8.3 Finance

DBR acknowledged that from a financial perspective, the next year would be challenging. The airport had experienced a good year to March 2020 with passenger numbers up by 1.64%. However, with passenger drops of around 13% from Thomas Cook and 24% from Flybe that momentum would be lost going forward. The focus would now have to be on sustainability and cost control so as to be prepared when the situation recovers.

Cardiff Airport had recently taken on Bro Tathan and Anglesey Airport, with a hope to update the passenger terminal at Anglesey. This was at short notice and in consultation with Anglesey Council, with Cardiff ideally placed to manage the facility with its already established management structure. Work is ongoing with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) in terms of compliance which hopefully will be in place within a month's time.

8.4. Regional Networks

There had often been discussion concerning the airport system imbalance to the South East airports, but one positive aspect to come from the Flybe announcement was recognition as to how critical the regional network is to business and the public. With Newquay, Southampton (with added reliance as a connection for cruise ships),

Exeter, etc. all relatively dependent on Flybe, there is greater emphasis on sharing the routes amongst airports with additional capacities rather than centrally locate in the South East.

DBR noted she had been campaigning for years to show the importance of the regional network and recent events have brought the matter into greater focus. There had been a meeting last week with the CAA and DfT which acknowledged that the position currently is not the same as it had been previously and the growing importance of regional connectivity.

The airport had raised the issues politically at Public Accounts Committee, in plenary session at the Senedd, with Assembly Members, direct with politicians from differing parties and with the Minister. It was acknowledged that there is overwhelming cross-party support for the airport and its importance.

It was acknowledged that it had been disappointed not to see Airport Passenger Duty (APD) discussed as part of the latest budget announcements, nor regional connectivity, but noted there may still be a review on APD.

8.5 Environment

From an environmental perspective, the airport launched its Environmental Flight Path in September 2019, details of which can be found on the website, discussing progress to date and plans to become carbon neutral. The airport is currently working with environmental consultants to establish a definitive date by which the airport could be carbon neutral.

Electric charge points are available at the entrance to the airport, and the public will see the fully electric Nissan Leaf staff pool car which has zero emissions and has been sponsored by Day's Motor Group and branded accordingly. There are plans to run competitions for the public to spot the pool car whilst it's out and about. There are proposed changes to staff and meet and greet car park plans, with the airport also looking at short stay options for electric charging early next year.

There is an agreement with the Vale of Glamorgan Council in terms of food recycling to compost what we can and provide that compost to the Ceri Road allotments in Rhose. There is a press release due out later today about this and other recycling initiatives.

Since the last meeting, there had been once noise complaint received on the 31st January 2020 from a Barry resident who stated that noise was disturbing the family. Attempts have been made to contact the complainant but there has been no further contact to date.

8.6 Charity

Cardiff Airport has now completed ten years of fundraising activities, supporting partnerships with Velindre, RNLI, Ty Hafan, etc. Staff activity to date had raised over £200,000. Committee members acknowledged the efforts of staff in raising this sum.

8.7 Questions

DR asked if there were any questions concerning the information provided as part of the business update.

- i) CS noted it was important to hear about the airport's involvement with Anglesey and asked if there were limits to seating numbers. DBR advised the airport was looking to have the terminal compliant with the relevant security programme. Currently the capacity was 19 seats, but once compliant, capacity could increase to up to 50 seats.
- ii) CS noted that with the announcement that the 3rd runway at Heathrow Airport no longer proceeding whether there were any options to bring back a Cardiff to Heathrow service. DBR advised there could be potential to do so. There is also potential for Cardiff to take on some of the proposed traffic that would have gone to runway three, with Cardiff having several key factors in its favour such as the length of runway, geographical location and the electrification of the railway links to the region in terms of connectivity.

CS noted that the previous Air Wales to London City service had been good. DBR advised the issue mainly concerned viability of routes and passenger service obligation (PSO) flights. Governmental permission is required to set a PSO as no other form of travel connection should exist in order to approve them, but we have good connectivity via train services. PSOs do operate from Newquay and Inverness as they do not have travel alternatives, such as rail. Flybe had run a service for a while but it was unsustainable in terms of London airport charges and without regional support.

- iii) The Chair asked about a service to Manchester. DBR advised that the CAA and DfT had mentioned that at the last meeting as part of supporting all regions and meet compliance. Such a route could be supported but again the PSO network needs to be looked at as part of a regional review. The setting up PSOs would be within Government's gift and Welsh Government are considering it.
- iv) AE asked if the public could drive demand for such services between London airports and Manchester as often the rail costs were considerably higher than flight costs would be. Public demand could drive additional routes. DBR advised that Lisa Morgan was currently assessing the data to assess the feasibility of such demand which could be shared with potential partners. AE added it may be beneficial to try and attract airlines away from London and use Cardiff, as Qatar had done. The Chair noted that a lot of travellers using Qatar are traveling to Cardiff for that service from the Midlands already. DBR confirmed this from information gathered from passenger data, as well as bringing passengers from Bristol, Gloucester and the South West. Services from Cardiff are often cheaper than those from London on certain routes as airlines set prices to encourage passengers to come to Cardiff, and passengers appreciate the price difference and how easy it is to get to Cardiff.

- v) AE asked if there was any scope for Ryanair to increase its scope to further European destinations, such as Portugal. DBR stated there could be scope, but this may be hampered by issues with the Boeing 737 Max, Brexit and COVID-19.
- vi) BA referred to Bro Tathan and asked for support from the airport to encourage traffic to use the new road rather than continue to use the village of St Athan. DBR advised she would pass on the issue, but noted that Welsh Government still run the commercial side of Bro Tathan and would discuss the matter with them to make them aware of concerns. As a 24-hour operator it was important to work together to maintain access to all sites without causing disruption to residents.

9. Updates from Committee Members

MS noted updates from Committee members as a new standing agenda item, with the Committee's permission, so that any relevant matters that Committee members felt should be discussed could be raised as specific items via the Chair. Committee members felt this to be a useful addition.

AE at this time offered a vote of thanks to Jeff James for all of his work over many years as previous Chair of the Cardiff Airport Consultative Committee, bringing local interests and depth of knowledge to the role. This was echoed by the Committee.

10. Questions from the floor.

- i) A member of the public referred to the earlier discussion concerning a route from Cardiff to Manchester and suggested the airport be mindful of Lufthansa in Germany who have assessed domestic route development. DBR advised the airport is looking at environmental issues and national transport availability as part of requirements for a truly integrated transport strategy.

The Regional and Business Airports Group (RABA) have commissioned a company to assess different types of travel based on carbon emissions. Some of the findings have challenged conventional thinking as the model does demonstrate occasions where flying can be more carbon efficient than other forms of transport. Some rail modelling is predicated on electrified lines in London, the South East and the spine of the country, but electrified lines are not available everywhere. Many of the trains run on diesel and assumptions are based on trains are running to capacity whereas actual load factors are around 35% which would make flying a more viable option.

There is a need to look at the best transport solutions for relevant journeys and assess each in an integrated way.

- ii) A member of the public referred to a problematic journey through the airport that had taken place last July as he had a hidden disability. The new sunflower system was now in place and staff at the airport are aware of the lanyards, badges and wristbands that signify passengers have hidden disabilities. It has been a welcome introduction and has significantly improved

the journey through the airport. The members of the public wished to compliment the airport on how it has taken on the system, trained staff accordingly and are following the system even during busier periods at the airport.

DBR added that the sunflower scheme is a national scheme and a universally recognised system (e.g. Tesco). Cardiff Airport was one of the first to utilise the scheme from last summer and was pleased for the Committee to note the positive feedback about the scheme which represents respect and dignity and would feed that back to the team.

The Chair asked if the scheme was known overseas; the member of the public stated that efforts were being made to publicise the scheme further by the Chair of the Passenger with Restricted Mobility forum.

It was noted that the scheme should be more widely publicised by agents in future.

- iii) A member of the public mentioned that one issue yet to be resolved involves the lifts. It was felt they were too small for wheelchairs and the public often have to queue to use them, but there had been assurances that the issues would be resolved.
- iv) AE asked about issues with passengers dealing with luggage around the airport. It was noted that there are areas where passengers were not able to use trolleys but it was necessary to keep passengers moving around the airport. If passengers are experiencing difficulties with luggage, some consideration should be given to whether it should be checked in rather than carried. In terms of distances from the terminal to the aircraft, the distances involved are shorter than at other airports.

Thanks were extended to everyone for attending.

Distribution:

All ACC Members

(Public Meeting concluded)