

Stansted Airport Consultative Committee

Chairman's Report 2025

Stansted Airport Consultative Committee has benefited from a stable membership throughout the year. Aubrey Holt was appointed to the role of Chair for the Environmental Issues Group, and in June we welcomed a new member, Chris Wilson, to the committee representing East Hertfordshire District Council.

Our search for a Technical Advisor and Secretary was successfully concluded in April, and we welcomed Iain Stewart to the Committee in May. Iain had been the MP for Milton Keynes South until the 2024 General Election and has a keen interest in transport, having chaired the Parliamentary Transport Select Committee. More recently, Ian has been acting as a freelance consultant in the transport arena.

The recruitment panel comprised Jackie Cheetham, Graham McAndrew, Aubrey Holt, and the Chairman, with technical support from Alistair Andrew. They were presented with four excellent candidates and unanimously recommended Iain for the role.

Stansted Airport continued to enjoy a high number of passenger throughput, with the summer period activity making it the busiest on record. The last year has been a very active one for the Airport, undertaking a number of major initiatives and continuing to progress national aviation sector programmes.

In February, Stansted Airport launched a consultation on its long-term plan for sustainable growth at the airport over the next 20 years. The Sustainable Development Plan (SDP) set out how Stansted planned to make the best use of the airport's existing single runway and how it planned to maximise the social and economic benefits it would bring to people and businesses locally. In addition, it set out how it would manage the impact of the airport's operation on local communities to the 2040s. As part of the plan, London Stansted submitted a planning application to increase the airport's annual passenger limit from 43 million passengers up to 51 million passengers. The application shows this growth being achieved without any increase in the number of flights that the airport is already permitted to operate and within the existing airport boundary. This growth is the result of airlines planning to use larger models of modern, efficient aircraft than previously forecast, enabling more people to fly on each plane and meeting additional passenger demand with flight limits remaining unchanged. Following the consultation period, the planning application has been submitted to Uttlesford District Council and is expected to go to the Planning Committee in November 2025.

The Future Security Project has continued throughout the year and progress has been followed by the Committee and by UEG. The phased introduction has allowed for a throughput of passengers whilst training staff and physically installing new machines. We will continue to monitor the operation as it moves to completion.

Airspace Modernisation continues to be progressed across the country with varying speeds and activity for geographic areas. The design of airspace changes for the London Terminal Manoeuvring Area (LTMA), of which Stansted Airport is a member, will be managed by the new UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS). This is aimed at reducing complexity and ensuring the delivery of airspace modernisation at scale and pace. Members of STACC have attended a number of engagement sessions with the DfT and CAA. The responsibility for ongoing community consultation on airspace design will continue to be the responsibility of the Airport.

The Noise Action Plan (NAP) which was accepted by Defra last year has since been signed off by the Minister. A national project to review a selection of airport noise plans was completed and a report sent to all airports. Stansted management produced a gap analysis with its NAP which was shared with EIG. EIG will monitor the application and performance of the plan at future meetings.

The DfT published their decision on the night flights regime for designated airports for the three years from 2025. While government controls will not be altered, Stansted will implement the changes agreed with local planners alongside the central controls.

The Committee continues to engage with the airport on operational performance and members have attended a number of visits to parts of the terminal to see management of day-to-day operations in action.

A number of projects have been and will continue to be the subject of discussion and monitoring by the Committee and its working groups. The following are subject to regular review and discussion:

Airport development

The initial phases of the Stansted Transformation Plan have been shared with STACC and its working groups. The detailed future phased plans will be presented to the STACC; EIG and UEG will review and engage with their respective areas through the progress of the development.

Airspace modernisation

We continue to engage with the programme of airspace change. Noting that the expected date of mobilisation of UKADS has been delayed, the committee will continue to engage with the airport as it prepares for the refinement and integration phase with other sponsors in the LTMA and works with NERL to look at integration of options with the future upper airspace network. The Stakeholder Reference Group, chaired by STACC, will be convened when appropriate to review next steps and comment on the engagement process and consultation material.

Surface access

Transport issues continue to be of critical importance to the airport's operational efficiency. Committee members attended the Stansted Area Transport Forum annual meeting in November, hearing about the future plans for transport serving the airport and its local area. The return of Stansted Express to four trains an hour and the recent introduction of the electronic gates at the station have been very positive moves towards increased efficiency. Cross Country and Cambridge rail services will continue to be subject to consideration. We will continue to monitor passenger transport modal share, which is continuing to move towards previous levels. UEG will continue to monitor the incidence of fly parking in local villages, a serious concern to members.

Assisted travel

Demand for assisted travel has shown a marked increase over the year. We continue to review and monitor the performance of the service. UEG and committee member Gobi Ranganathan are active in visiting the service offered to users. Gobi is a member of Stansted's SAFE forum and has attended a DfT engagement session on assisted travel services.

Border Force

UEG maintains a strong relationship with Border Force. This will be an important area of focus as the terminal transformation progresses.

Sustainability

Sustainability issues have been covered in detail at EIG. Zero carbon, waste and water management, and biodiversity have all been the subject of presentations throughout the year. The solar farm development and Sustainable Aviation Fuel will form part of future meetings.

Community Fund

The Committee receives regular updates on the fund, which has been very successful in encouraging bids from a wide variety of local community projects. STACC member Brian Ross is our representative on the funds committee.

During the year, the Committee has received a number of presentations on various aspects of the Airports' activities and from other related businesses; Jackie Sadek, Chair of The UK Innovation Corridor, presented on the strategy of the corridor and the importance of Stansted Airport to its future activities; Anglian Ruskin University presented the results of their benchmarking analysis of the performance of Gatwick Airport and Stansted Airport at points of comparable passenger numbers; Duncan Smith from STAL delivered a presentation on the management and monitoring of Noise at the Airport and the surrounding area; a presentation was given by the Airport management on Resilience at the airport, covering the management approach to business continuity, emergency planning, and crisis management; as part of the consultation, a presentation of the SDP was delivered to the Committee; Iain Stewart presented an external view of the air freight sector and its future direction; Neil Robinson presented the MAG Sustainability Strategy.

The Committee, through the Chair and the Technical Advisor and Secretary, continues to participate in the work of UKACCs, which brings together 24 airport consultative committees from the UK's largest airports to discuss matters of common interest and to share best practice and concerns.

Looking ahead

The attached paper outlining the agenda items for future STACC and working group meetings outlines the areas of focus across the coming year. The annual UKACC's meeting, attended by the Chair, Technical Advisor and Secretary, will provide an opportunity to share the priorities of other consultative committees. The shared discussions will be brought back to STACC for consideration.

The Committee is committed to undertaking an economic study of the impact of the airport on the wider community. This project was due to follow the conclusion of the most recent planning application, which is now expected to happen soon. The project will be initiated with a presentation of the airport's economic model and its assumptions.

We have previously committed to develop induction and refresher training for committee members to support them in their work within the committee and working groups. Whilst there have been a number of site visits and some presentations, there is further work needed by the Committee to develop an appropriate programme of induction and training.

The recruitment of Iain Stewart as the Technical Advisor and Secretary provides stability to the Committee, which can now manage the transition to a new Chair. The Committee will develop a recruitment process in the new year with the aim of transition by the end of June 2026.

Stansted airport is looking forward to another busy year ahead as it continues to manage growing passenger numbers, and maintaining customer satisfaction whilst carrying out the Transformation of the airport's infrastructure. This will be managed in an environment of regulatory change. STACC will continue to engage with the airport as the voice of member organisations in its role as a critical friend.