

Stansted Airport Consultative Committee

Chairman's Report 2024

Stansted Airport Consultative Committee started the year saying goodbye to a number of Councillors following the council elections and welcoming new Councillors along with a new member to represent passengers and particularly those with accessibility requirements. We have also welcomed Julia Ogiehor representing ABTA, Coral Lindfield representing passenger interests and Councillor Alastair Gunn representing Harlow Council.

During the year Andrew Huggins who, as a pilot, represented aviation interests and chaired EIG, relocated to Dubai to join Emirates as a pilot. We will miss Andrew's expert contribution to the committee and to EIG and wish him well for the future.

In December 2023 we received the very saddest news that Frank Evans, who had been Secretary and Technical adviser to STACC since 2012, had died following a period of illness. We will miss Frank's expertise and commitment to the Committee as well as his quiet diplomacy and friendship to all committee members and to STAL management team.

We continue the search for a new secretary and technical adviser which is proving to be a challenging recruitment. In the meantime, we have been supported by a number of experienced secretaries, namely Carol Pull, Paula Street and Michelle Boness. We have continued to be supported by the STAL communities' team. Our principal contact, Daniel Burford has recently been promoted into a new role at the Airport and we have a new principal contact, Daniel Turpin who is ably assisted by Morgan Redman.

Stansted Airport started the year with a return to pre-pandemic levels of activity becoming the fastest recovering major UK airport. This performance level has continued through Christmas, Easter and Summer seasons.

This last year has been a very active one for the Airport which has undertaken a number of major initiatives both internally and externally initiated. A planning application for the reconfiguration of the airport terminal building was submitted in July 2023 and permission was granted in December.

The Future Security Requirement Project was embarked upon in the year, once completed this will enable the Airport to scan every passenger through a body scanner, delivering a speedier process and an improved passenger experience. The project plan follows a phased introduction of the new security configuration allowing for the throughput of passengers whilst training staff and physically installing the new equipment which is very different in size and process.

Airspace Modernisation continues to progress with ongoing work with other change sponsors within the London Terminal Maneuvering Area (LTMA) and the Airspace Change Organising Group (ACOG). The DfT and CAA have launched a joint consultation proposing to create a single design entity, UK Airspace Design Service (UKADS) aimed at reducing complexity and ensuring the delivery of airspace modernisation at scale and pace.

The Airport produced, after consultation a revised Noise Action Plan (NAP) which has been accepted by Defra, but this has yet to be subject to written acceptance awaiting ministerial sign off. There has been a further review of a number of airport NAP's, but this review does not include Stansted.

Night flights have continued to be subject to designation by the DfT who issued a consultation on the government's future night flight controls at designated airports along with updated guidance on night flight dispensations.

Stansted has continued to lobby for a return to original levels of transport services for passengers in its drive to achieve the previous high levels of public transport modal share. Stansted Express returned to four trains an hour service in December and a number of new bus services have been introduced.

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

A number of projects have been and will continue to be discussed and tracked by the Committee and it's working groups, EIG and UEG. The following are regularly reviewed and discussed at STACC:

Airport development

The initial online plans for the Stansted Transformation Plan and the Solar farm have been shared with STACC and it's committees and the subsequent detailed plans will return to the committee. The two sub committees, EIG and UEG will be review their respective areas with these projects as they mature.

Airspace modernisation

We continue to engage with the programme of airspace change. Whilst the Airport has updated STACC that it has passed gateway 2, there remains one London airport still to reach that gateway. The biggest delay to the process is the consultation of UKDAS launched on 22 October, if agreed this is expected to mobilise in April 2025. 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 supported by other members will be reconvened to review next steps and comment on the engagement process and consultation material.

Surface access

Transport issues continue to be of critical importance, committee members attended the 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 across the schedule has been a key aim. The airport has engaged with DfT, and greater Anglia and John Pope and Graham McAndrew have lobbied their contacts on the matter. The cross country and Cambridge rail services continue to be poor and are regularly raised at UEG and STACC. There is still work to do to return the modal share back to previous levels. The greater numbers of passengers driving to the Airport has also given rise to an increase in fly parking in local villages which continues to be a concern to members.

Security

The phased implementation of the Security Programme continues and will be monitored and reviewed by UEG.

Noise Action Plan and Night Noise

EIG has regularly reviewed the progress of the current noise action plan. The Committee reviewed the proposed noise action plan for 2024-2028 and the consultation process. STACC members felt that the consultation period did not afford Parish Councils and others enough time to review and respond, it was pleased that the airport extended the consultation to enable parish councils the opportunity to consider the plan and respond.

Following a special meeting with STAL teams and taking feedback from representative groups EIG responded to the DfT consultation on the government's future night flight controls at designated airports. It met with the Airport to discuss the updated guidance on night flight dispensations and to define the community reporting requirements.

PRM

We continue to review and monitor the PRM service provided at the airport which continues to maintain a good service. Gobi Ranganathan is a member of the SAFE forum alongside the Secretary and Technical Adviser. The new Terminal development will be a key focus over the next year.

Zero Carbon

The solar farm will contribute to the carbon management at the airport. Jet Zero will continue to be a topic for EIG to consider.

Community fund

The fund has been very successful in managing bids for local community projects. The Committee receives regular updates on the fund's activities and Brian Ross represents STACC on the fund.

STACC website

The committee plans to work with the airport as it revises its website with the aim of enabling easier navigation to the extensive resources on the site.

Benchmarking project

The benchmarking study, set to compare the performance of Gatwick to Stansted at points of comparable passenger numbers, has been progressing with the support of Anglia Ruskin University. The study is in its final stages and will provide a framework for comparison in the future as Stansted continues to grow.

During the year the Committee has received a number of presentations on various aspects of the Airport's activities: The role of the Airport Chaplain presented by Rev Peter Allan; The Stansted Airport College presented by Victoria Claydensmith, Head of College; Stansted Transformation Project presented by STAL management. EIG received a presentation from the DfT on the consultation on the government's night flight controls at designated airports and the updated guidance on night flight dispensations.

Looking ahead

The coming year will continue to see the Committee focus on the above areas as well as any new emerging projects or issues. It is important that we provide members with support in the form of induction and refresher training to enable full engagement with the work of the committee and working groups. In the early part of 2024 we organised, with the assistance of the airport management, a series of airport visits for new and existing members. These were very successful and assisted members to gain a complete view of the airport's operation. We will develop a programme of induction and training to enhance the work of the Committee and its working groups.

The very important work of recruiting a new secretary and technical adviser will continue with support from a new search agency.

We look forward to a busy year ahead as Stansted Airport continues to grow its passenger numbers whilst engaging in major development to improve service and operations and implement regulatory changes.

Shena Winning
October 2024