

Aviation Report – December 2023

Alan Jones

Introduction

Unlike my last report to the Council, I am pleased to say that I have been able to attend all the meetings shown below. I am also pleased that Councillor Eddie Lord has been in attendance at several of them.

17th October – GATCOM Special Meeting to discuss representation for DCO Runway
19th October – GACT Virtual Meeting to discuss new application form
31st October – NATMAG Virtual Pre-meeting
2nd November – GATCOM Virtual meeting
9th November – NATMAG Virtual Meeting
13th November – GATCOM Away Day
15th November – GACT Meeting
6th December – Gatwick Annual Public Meeting

GATCOM SPECIAL MEETING ON NORTHERN RUNWAY DCO – 17TH OCTOBER

The purpose of this meeting was to discuss GATCOM representation at the Northern Runway Development Consent Order (DCO) enquiry when the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will be listening to the evidence in favour and against. Those wishing to make Relevant Representation had to submit by a specific date but PINS had a technical issue so that many applications could not be lodged. However, for those who left it to the last minute, PINS decided to extend the closing date to 19th November. I am pleased to say that the BPC application was submitted in plenty of time and my name has gone forward as the point of contact but our Clerk should also be advised.

You will have seen that the BPC submission supported GATCOM but emphasised the highway infrastructure would be unable to cope with at least an extra 20mppa. Some political joined-up thinking is necessary from Central down to Local Government as our low category roads and lanes would be unable to cope if/when the M25 and/or M23 have traffic flows impeded as they would be an alternative route to/from the airport.

GACT NEW APPLICATION PROCESS – 19TH OCTOBER

The Trustees of Gatwick Airport Community Trust (GACT) have decided to go on line for business for a variety of reasons so, apart from needing to have an application form which will be more self-checking, any grants will be done through bank transfers. We have spent quite a lot of time assessing the current application form to assist applicants as, so often, they leave blanks or complete illogical numbers and that usually leads to their application not being considered. The new on-line form is intended to help overcome as any hurdles as possible such that it should not be possible to move onto the next question until the previous answer has been completed. Trustees have found the previous paper system very useful but we hope the new system will make it less onerous for all concerned.

We had a further Trustees' meeting on 15th November to clarify the new way forward and to decide on dates for opening and closing applications as follows:

Application opening date: 1st January 2024

Application closing date: 31st March 2024

Grants to be paid out in June 2024 by bank transfer.

I intend to put something in the Parish News to bring these dates to the attention of prospective applicants.

GATCOM VIRTUAL MEETING – 2ND NOVEMBER

From an NMB recommendation, it was agreed that GATCOM write a short note to the Department for Transport, copied to the Department for Levelling Up, Communities and Housing, asking senior officials to incorporate a policy on aviation noise and land use planning in the Noise Policy Statement for England. The Co-Chairs will supply appropriate wording to the GATCOM Chair & Secretariat.

The Chief Executive Officer Report

Stewart Wingate comments from his quarterly report are summarised as follows:

- Baroness Margaret Ford of Cuninghame is the new Chair of London Gatwick. Sir David Higgins will remain as a non-executive Director. It was hoped Baroness Ford would attend a GATCOM meeting next year.

- Whilst the NATS technical issue on August bank holiday was challenging for all, there were further challenges in September that resulted in a temporary limit on daily flight movements until 1st October. The decision was made alongside NATS, who were experiencing 30% of their staff being unavailable for a variety of medical reasons including COVID. London Gatwick continues to work with NATS to build resilience.

- The five-year Capital Investment Programme was published in July with over £2billion of investment in facilities and services.

- The CAA's latest accessibility report has rated London Gatwick as 'Very Good.'

- Gatwick will serve 210 destinations by the end of 2023 making it one of the best connected airports in Europe.

- The upgrading and improvements at Gatwick's Rail Station is expected to be completed by the end of this year.

- It was noted that the PINS website to register as an interested party for the Northern Runway DCO, had technical issues on the final day. Both Gatwick and GATCOM confirmed a response was awaited from PINS. Post meeting note – the website has re-opened until 19 November.

- GATCOM welcomed London Gatwick signing the Armed Forces Covenant

Great British Railway Transition Team (GBRTT)

Emily James, Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Great British Railways Transition Team, provided GATCOM with a presentation and overview of her teams work and plans for rail reform.

GOVIA THAMESLINK Rail Services Update

Tim Aveline and Paul Codd from Govia Thameslink provided a presentation and update on rail services at Gatwick. Members welcomed the two Rail updates and raised the following issues:

- The new Rail Station was welcomed but the lack of access for local residents was of concern and some members felt this could be improved.

- It was confirmed there was adequate capacity on the Brighton mainline for additional passengers should the DCO progress.

- The Croydon Area Remodelling Schemes was on hold due to lack of funding from the treasury.

- It was confirmed that improvements to the East/West rail services were being implemented from December with services becoming half hourly. This was part funded by London Gatwick through the Transport Fund.

- Some members questioned why the Gatwick Express was still a premium price when it was no longer a premium service, but it was confirmed this is still considered to be a separate service to the commuter service.

- There were no plans to extend the hours of service either earlier or later. This was due to the fact that Network Rail need time for track maintenance.

- It was confirmed that GBRTT were working closely with the DfT, and a consultation was planned on accessibility.

AIRSPACE UPDATE

Airspace Modernisation: FASI-South

The Design Principle Evaluation (DPE) and the Initial Options Appraisal (IOA) have been completed and were submitted to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for review at the Future Airspace Strategy Implementation - South (FASI-S) for Gatwick (ACP-2018-60) project Stage 2 Gateway.

The decision to proceed to stage 3, the consultation stage, has been approved. The Department for Transport and the CAA are exploring drawing all individual airspace change projects together under a unified delivery model through a single design entity (SDE). As the scope, process and timeline for this initiative is in development the project schedule for Gatwick's airspace change is uncertain.

It was noted that the CAA has published the revised CAP1616 Airspace Change process. It was not yet known what affect this would have but it would be discussed more at the next NATMAG meeting. It was confirmed that the details of this year's Noise and Airspace Annual Public Meeting being held on 6th December would be circulated very soon.

NATMAG VIRTUAL MEETING – 9TH NOVEMBER

In the Performance Summary Table

Concern was expressed that track keeping conformance is steadily getting worse. However, this is due to the experiences with Route 4 which is a difficult turn for some types of aircraft and, particularly those that are flying eastwards. In later tables route 4 track-keeping is ignored and it will be seen what a difference this makes.

Airline Performance Table

This is a useful table that compares the airline performance of all airlines who fly in and out of Gatwick at least 10 times per week. Ignoring route 4 (as described above) the track keeping is very good. However, CDO performance varies considerably as the traffic light system indicates in the table. Of those who regularly use Gatwick Airport, only BA and TUI feature in the CDO amber but those in the red are those who have less flights. The Airspace Office and NATS have discussions with these airlines and have seen some remarkable improvements. However, as the number of

red infringements is increasing, it is likely that a forum will be organised with several of the good along with the bad CDO performers in the form of a workshop to see if a step change can be achieved.

Go Arounds

This still gives some cause for concern although we are assured that there has been no noticeable increase in this quarter. Work has now been completed on the fast exit taxiway so it is to be hoped, that with the runway being cleared of arriving traffic more quickly, that this will lead to less go arounds in future.

Departure Noise Limits

Departure noise limits have not been changed since 2001 so infringements have been negligible as the aircraft have become quieter. A new 3 stage scheme has been devised where is not just the noisiest of aircraft that could be penalised but those aircraft that should not be causing so much noise on departure. It is proposed to introduce this scheme in the near future assuming it gets the green light from the airlines. Fines for any infringements are transferred to GACT so the new regime might provide some useful money for we Trustees to award to deserving causes. In fact, an example was quoted that from 109,000 departures over a period of time, 57 would have infringed the noise limits and incurred a total fine of £108,000.

GATCOM AWAY DAY – 13TH NOVEMBER

Eddie Lord and I attended this meeting at the Holiday Inn, Crabbet Park. The secretariat produced a very useful GATCOM work programme from last year and showing what advances have been made. Many of them are future challenges so are being rolled over into the work programme being updated from this meeting. There was a general discussion on the way GATCOM currently works and whether the membership is correct or needs some changing.

This was followed by three roundtable discussion groups one of which we could choose to join. One was on 'ways of working', another on 'steering group membership' and a third on 'GATCOM's Environment and Amenities group membership'. The Lead from each group reported back at the end.

In the afternoon, the work programme for 2024 was discussed as well as the key topics of interest to members.

It was regarded a successful meeting.

GACT MEETING -15TH NOVEMBER

In future, all applications for grants will be electronically generated. We decided that this could overcome some of the problems that paper applications have encountered. One of the big problems for trustees has been the incorrect completion of the forms, particularly the financial questions and this has led to a number being dismissed out of hand. The new application form has been designed so that it cannot be submitted until all the questions have been answered. This will be beneficial to both the applicants and the trustees who are assessing them. This is the first year that we are trying this and we have spent a lot of time trying to ensure that it operates in the manner described. We can expect some hiccups at first even though we have tried to be thorough.

For 2024 the window for applying is from 1st January to 31st March and the application forms can be found on the GACT website.

GACT will meet on 29th May to determine the final list of grants and a resultant 'yes' or 'no' message will be sent out on that day.

GATWICK AIRPORT PUBLIC MEETING – 6TH DECEMBER

This was the final meeting of the year which gives public the opportunity to catch up with what has been happening, particularly to do with the noise environment. From Gatwick Airport staff, we were given a round up talk by Andy Sinclair and one on the STEM initiative by Alison Addy. The latter is trying to encourage young people to discover the type of jobs that could be open to them like engineering and technology. Whilst it is new, they have already had 200 pupils coming to their learning centre so this might be an opportunity for schools in the close vicinity to investigate.

An interesting talk by Alan McHenry from Kent, Surrey and Sussex Air Ambulance Charity where a Defibrillator Drone Trial is being rolled out. If somebody suffers a heart attack it can sometimes take too long for an ambulance to reach the victim in time but a drone could arrive more quickly. The charity is working closely with NATS to ensure the correct use of drones in a busy airspace.

Other talks were given on:

- A round-up of the second term of the NMB
- Airline Noise Performance Table
- Reduced Night Noise Trial

The meeting concluded with a Panel Discussion comprising staff from London Gatwick, Department for Transport and NATS who fielded several questions from the floor.

Future Meetings

23rd January 2024 – NaTMAG pre-meeting

25th January – GATCOM in person

1st February – NaTMAG Meeting