

Aviation Report – February 2019

Alan Jones

Introduction

Following my December report I was away for six weeks and this was a quiet time at Gatwick, except for the December drone incident whose fame spread all the way across the world to me. The only Gatwick related events I have attended were:

- 22nd January – Farewell Dinner for Retiring GATCOM Chairman
- 24th January - GATCOM
- 7th February - NATMAG

GATWICK CHAIRMAN FAREWELL DINNER – 22ND JANUARY 2019

Gatwick Airport organised a farewell dinner for John Godfrey at Gravetye Manor hotel and I was one of the 30 lucky ones to be invited. This is the first time I have had a meal at this hotel and I am sure the prices are very high so it is unlikely that I shall sample the excellent fare again.

Stewart Wingate gave a very good speech which was also amusing and John replied in kind so a very convivial evening was had by all.

As I said in a previous report, he will be a difficult act to follow. However, I have had a one to one meeting with Tom Crowley, the new chairman, and I think he understands what he is up against. He has already chaired his first meeting (see below)

GATCOM – 24TH JANUARY 2019

Chairing the meeting for the first time, Tom Crowley stated the intention of the committee will be to continue to be a critical friend to the airport's management.

He referred to the GAL's ambitious Master Plan for growth and understood that the airport had received a large amount of responses to their draft plan.

He also mentioned the NMB review that was in process and the final work the review panel have been invited to consider which includes the governance issues.

He further mentioned the government consultation in progress on the new Aviation Strategy, the London Airspace modernisation programme and the implications of BREXIT for Gatwick and the region.

The GAL Report by CEO, Stewart Wingate

Drone Event

Stewart began with an explanation about the drone incident at Gatwick Airport between 19th and 21st December. It was decided at an early stage that the government should be informed and the army were deployed with military grade counter-drone equipment.

The disruption resulted in 900 flight cancellations and travel plans of 164,000 passengers. He was very proud of the way that the airport community came together to help manage the disruption, including 6 PAG members

GAL has since invested several million pounds into multi-layered counter drone technology, although they had been trialling a form of counter-drone technology prior to the incident.

Gal is continuing to lobby the government for changes to the law who announced on 7th January that they would be extending the 'no drone zone' exclusion from 1km to 5 km long when they bring forward legislation very soon.

Future Ownership and Management of Gatwick Airport Limited

You may have read in the press that GIP (major shareholders of GAL) had sold some of their holding to VINCI Airports but it is in the form of a partnership as GIP will maintain its integral role in the management and ownership of the airport. The transaction is expected to be completed by the middle of the year.

Other issues covered in the CEO's report were:

- Year on Year growth 6.1% in December.
- Aircraft load factor is 83.5%
- Gatwick have been reassured that a 'no deal Brexit' will not affect arrivals and departures in the EU.
- GAL was concerned about the poor level of Special Assistance Services by Wilson James but there have been significant improvements.

Airport Master Plan Review

Burstow PC was among 5000 responses to the draft Master Plan and Ipsos Mori has been commissioned to analyse them. The report will comprise two parts – one will set out the process and the other part will summarise the responses received to the questions.

NMB Review

The Review Panel reported back to the NMB in January and has been instructed to develop some of their ideas further; they will be particularly looking at governance and authenticity of each of the Community Noise Groups. The main thrust of their report is to have more CNGs with an Executive to which they would be answerable. We await the final recommendations.

Brighton Main Line and Rail Services

We had a regular annual visit from GTR Patrick Verwer (CEO), Angie Doll (Passenger Services Director) and Paul Harwood from Network Rail. After the disastrous introduction of last May's new timetable the service performance has improved considerably with so many more trains arriving on time. Gatwick Express services are not performing as well.

The Gatwick Station project is progressing with the planning application being considered by Crawley Council on 11th February.

From Saturday 16th to Sunday 24th February the line south of Three Bridges to Brighton will be closed. 250 buses are being laid on to transport passengers along the route whilst this essential upgrading work is being carried out.

A consultation process is taking place on development of Windmill Junction just north of East Croydon station. The current rail track layout causes major delays and it will be an enormous task to sort out a new scheme to help run the train services much more efficiently. So far, 90% of respondents are in favour of the new scheme. Depending on funding approvals, works can be expected to commence in 2021 with expected completion in 2030.

NATMAG – 7TH FEBRUARY 2019

CASPER

A new Noise and Track Keeping (NTK) monitoring system to replace CASPER is expected to be operational later this year. At this meeting we discussed what the new system might be capable of achieving with the technology that has been developed in recent years. As the technical and monitoring function is the responsibility of NATMAG, we started our discussions at this meeting on how we would like the data presented in future. The monitors will be operating remotely on 4G so that information can be continually gathered; our role will be to decide how to use it to benefit our knowledge but mainly to inform the public. A second workshop is being held by the group on 20th February to progress this project.

We feel it is very important to ensure that this new system is available to the public in real time; we will probably be producing a monthly/quarterly summary on the website which should be an improvement on just producing minutes and reports. The latter we are likely to be seeing at our quarterly meetings to discuss in depth before the summary report is issued.

For those who have missed being able to report noise on the telephone line, this will be possible later this year as we expect to be able to tie in any telephone noise complaint with all the other data/information we are receiving on line. We wish to concentrate on issues and how to resolve them, rather than on complainants.

Drones

As reported elsewhere, this has been a difficult issue and was discussed at this meeting. We received an airline pilot's perception on this problem and how they believe the exclusion zone should be decided.

Air Quality

We have raised this issue previously at NATMAG as to whether air quality should be monitored by this forum or another as it was important to advise the community where there might be any risks. Whilst not agreeing that there is, it would be advantageous to have measurements to back up responses to any complainants. The question is whether it should be with NATMAG

Future Meetings

20th February – NATMAG workshop on new NTK system

5th March – GACT meeting to start considering grant applications

21st March – GATCOM Steering Group

25th April – GATCOM

30th April – NATMAG Pre-meeting

9th May - NATMAG