

BIGGIN HILL AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEE

Chairman:
Mr J. Bowden
Clarkson Wright & Jakes
Valiant House, 12 Knoll Rise
Orpington, Kent, BR6 0PG
e-mail: john.bowden@cwj.co.uk

ANNUAL REPORT 2016

1. Summary

1.01 Under Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (as amended), the Biggin Hill Airport Consultative Committee is constituted from representatives of companies at the Airport, local authorities and residents' associations.

1.02 The aims of the Committee are:-

- (a) to consult with and inform the local community of developments and plans for the Airport;
- (b) to allow the efficient functioning and economic development of the Airport, its airport business community, its resident workforce, while moderating its impact upon local communities and the environment;
- (c) to ensure that the Airport plays an active role in supporting the economic activities and objectives of the local and regional communities (business and residential).

1.03 The Committee meets four times a year in January (when the Annual General Meeting is also held), April, July and October.

1.04 All meetings were held at the Airport and, as usual, were well attended.

2. Membership

2.01 There was only one change to the membership of the Committee during the year and on 20 October, I was pleased to be able to welcome Councillor Keith Jecks to his first meeting. He had been appointed by Tandridge District Council in place of Councillor David Weightman. Councillor Martin Allen is his substitute and he attended the 14 July meeting.

2.02 Substitute members are permitted and a number attended in place of appointed members who were unable to attend meetings during the year.

3. Complaints and movements

3.01 The Committee has a Noise and Safety Sub-Committee which meets prior to meetings of the Committee. The Chairman of the Sub-committee, Councillor Richard

Parry, provides very full and clear reports of the results of its discussions of complaints at our meetings.

3.02 Some of the complaints that are received do not relate to Biggin Hill movements and there were 90 complaints during the year from 1 October 2015 to 30 September 2016 that related to Biggin Hill movements. In the same period of 2014/15 there had been 127. The higher number last year probably had a lot to do with the high profile of the Airport due to the publicity about the application for increased the operating hours and, although that effect might not have entirely gone, it appears to have diminished.

3.03 In the year up to the end of September 2016 there were a total of 50,099 aircraft movements at the Airport. The number of complaints, therefore, continues to be extremely low relative to the number of movements.

3.04 The Committee is provided with a map at each meeting showing from where complaints emanate to enable members to identify whether there is any consistent pattern of which it should be aware. It also enables members to ask for information about complaints in areas that they represent or in which they live.

3.05 Councillor Parry consistently reports that the complaints have been handled fully and well.

3.06 Relatively few of the complaints were upheld because they related to movements which contravened the Airport's operating regulations.

4. 21 January 2016 meeting

4.01 The first meeting of the calendar year was preceded by the Annual General Meeting at which the Annual Report is received. The most notable issues dealt with at the main meeting are referred to below.

4.02 *Application to vary Airport operating hours* - more than 12 months after the initial application to vary the operating criteria in the existing airport operating hours, Bromley Council had voted to approve the Airport's request.

4.03 *Proposal for the new runway 03 Instrument Approach Procedure* - members heard about the revised procedure and were advised that the new approach will lead to a significant reduction in the proportion of aircraft using Biggin Hill Airport overflying the residential areas lying to the north and north east of the Airport

4.04 *Revised Noise Action Plan (NAP)* - I mentioned in last year's Annual Report that the Airport was introducing a Noise Action Plan voluntarily. A copy of the Plan was circulated with the papers for the meeting.

4.05 *Noise Monitoring and Track Keeping System* – we received an update on the setting up and commissioning of the Noise Monitoring and Track Keeping System and how the three noise monitors which were being purchased would be utilised. It was noted that the readings would be fed into the control tower and subsequently made available on the Airport's website.

5. 21 April 2016 meeting

5.01 This was a low-key meeting with no controversial issues to discuss.

5.02 *RAF Northolt* - We heard that a communication from the UK Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) had advised that it did not intend to take any action on the use of RAF

Northolt for civil aviation. The Airport had responded that that the CAA appeared to be failing in its statutory duty.

5.03 *New runway 03 GPS approach* - the Committee was informed that the new approach procedure had passed the stakeholder consultation stage and a report setting out the proposal had been submitted to the CAA for approval.

5.04 *Air Show 2016* - we were advised that the CAA had been doing a lot of work on air show regulations following the crash at the 2015 Shoreham Air Show. The CAA had approved the plans and risk assessments for the Biggin Hill's Festival of Flight which would be taking place on Saturday, 11 June 2016.

5.05 *RizonJet* - the Committee heard that the company was remodelling itself in response to the Middle East situation, the delay in implementing the revised opening hours and unfair competition from Northolt Airport. As a result, it was winding down its operations at Biggin Hill Airport. We were advised that another tenant of the Airport was prepared to take over the operations and most staff would transfer. However, this depended on the revised opening hours being implemented in the reasonably near future.

6. 14 July 2016 meeting

6.01 This was a more substantial meeting and the following are some of the more significant issues covered.

6.02 *UK aviation policy and Biggin Hill Airport* - this was the first meeting of the Committee held since the UK Referendum decision to leave the European Union. The Airport Managing Director (AMD) advised that he believed that the UK would remain a European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) contracting state. This would mean that Biggin Hill will be required to convert to a EASA aerodrome licence but because most EASA regulations had already been adopted, little would change in the day-to-day operation of the Airport. However, it could change the manner in which BHAL would be able to control access to the Airport by users. In particular, airports would have to be open to all on an equivalent basis so it may be more difficult to preclude individual users on the basis of local restrictions. The AMD anticipated that this could lead to challenges by operators barred from using the Airport by the conditions set out in the current lease. The implications were being examined but environmental limitations set out in the Noise Action Plan (NAP) would be expected to override other considerations. The AMD emphasised that BHAL was not interested in having scheduled airlines operating from the Airport.

6.03 In answer to a question, members were advised that the noise limits on Chapter 3 and 4 aircraft would not be affected as it should be possible for a good environmental case to be made for their use to be controlled.

6.04 *RAF Northolt* - members were advised that the Airport company was waiting to see if there would be any change of policy by the new Government before taking any action. We heard that the Government was proposing to provide £60m to enable the Northolt runway to be re-laid as the commercial aircraft were heavier than planes that the runway was designed to accommodate and that this opportunity was to be taken to carry out works to obfuscate the actual runway length. The Committee agreed that it would send a letter to the new Prime Minister, Theresa May, and also to Liam Fox, MP

and Michael Fallon MP. It should include the case that the opportunities at Biggin Hill and Farnborough would outweigh any advantages that may be perceived at Northolt. I duly sent such a letter.

6.05 *BHAL application to vary Airport operating hours* - it was noted that Bromley Council had approved the lease variation that would give effect to the revised operating hours. However, before the new hours could be adopted, various elements of the NAP must be provided, including the installation and commissioning of the new Noise Monitoring and Track Keeping System. Initially, three mobile noise measuring units would be sited until the most appropriate sites for the permanent units are identified. The on-line information tracking and noise portal system would become operational when the system was able to record accurately.

6.06 *Airport facilities* – we were advised that approach lighting to serve the new runway 03 GPS approach would be installed during the summer.

6.07 *Tenants and businesses at Biggin Hill* – we received more information about Rizon Jet UK having closed down and the liquidation of its operating arm. Around 50 members of staff were made redundant but the owner had elected to retain ownership of the building and put it up for lease. The Field Base Operator terminal area of the building had been occupied by an existing Biggin Hill Airport tenant, Signature Flight Support, a well-known and trusted British-owned company. The maintenance end of the hangar, along with the maintenance offices, would be occupied by Bombardier Business Aircraft which would set up a heavy maintenance facility to support its European client base.

6.08 *Technical Training College* – Bromley Council had recently presented its Master Plan for the technical training college which would have a training hangar

6.09 *Environment* – the Airport Company had begun work on a new Ground Noise Action Plan as required by the NAP. Means by which surrounding areas might be better shielded from ground noise would be considered including the orientation of future new buildings so that they shield noise. Additional ground noise barriers (bunds) would be used where applicable. Restrictions on the generation of ground noise by aircraft operators would also be considered.

6.10 *Local Plan* - the Committee received information about the Local Plan which was to be subject to public consultation. We noted the areas for retention in the Green Belt and that West Camp, etc., would be taken out. We were advised that the Plan envisaged creation of 2,300 new jobs within the Biggin Hill Strategic Outer London Development Centre (SOLDC) that, but in order to deliver this, a clear and unambiguous policy regarding new development within the entire SOLDC area. The AMD's report questioned the rationality of the allocation of Green Belt land.

6.11 *Hangar* - it was noted that a planning application for an additional hangar had been submitted.

6.12 *Airport hotel* - for many years the Committee has been discussing a proposed Airport hotel but so far it has not come to fruition but we were advised that the Airport Company was intending to bring forward a new design.

7. 20 October 2016 meeting

7.01 This was another more substantial meeting, a significant part of the meeting involving economic development. The discussions included the following.

7.02 *RAF Northolt* - members were informed that the Airport Company had written to the CAA setting out why it believes that it had not complied with the law and a response was awaited. The Company was considering whether it would take the matter back to court for determination. In the meantime, an appeal had been made to the new ministers and to the Prime Minister to ask for a review of JSP 360 (which deals with the use of military airfields by British and foreign civil aircraft) and the civil activities at RAF Northolt. It was anticipated that the results of the Strategic Defence and Security Review 2016 to be published in November could include a comprehensive reappraisal of the civilian movements at RAF Northolt. I reported that I had not had any response to my letter to the Prime Minister concerning RAF Northolt.

7.03 *Application to vary Airport operating hours* - the Noise and Tracking System was now installed and undergoing testing and we saw an example of the post-flight data. When fully operational in early 2017, the system would allow complaints to be responded to using detailed track information along with the data from the noise monitors and members of the public would be able to view this information directly via the web portal.

7.04 *Airport facilities* – members noted that some changes had been made to the runway 03 revised approach which would require a second consultation. Implementation of the new approach was, therefore, expected to be delayed until late in the second quarter of 2017, depending on the CAA's reaction.

7.05 *Runway 29/11* – the Airport Company had started to consult with the general aviation community over the future of the runway

7.06 *Second terminal hangar* - the Company was proving a second terminal hangar at a cost of £6.5m which was being located to the north of the terminal, supplemented by an increase in ramp area. It would be oriented to separate the ramp area from residential areas and thus blocking noise.

7.07 *Airport hotel* – the proposed hotel again came up for discussion and the final design had been agreed and it was hoped that work on the building would start from mid-2017. It would initially have 50 bedrooms and be designed so that it could be extended to 75 bedrooms.

7.08 *Local Plan* - there is an organisation called London Centre for Aviation Technology and Enterprise (LoCATE) which is a collective of public and private representatives that is forming a vision for the Airport. LoCATE stakeholders were collectively urging Bromley Council to deliver land allocations needed to complement the business generated by the additional hours.

7.09 *Enterprise Zone* - the Airport had been in preliminary discussions with surrounding local authorities to discuss the possible creation of an Enterprise Zone comprising a technology corridor spanning Croydon, Bromley and Sevenoaks. It would complement the creation of the world-class aviation academy, focusing on engineering and high-end technologies.

7.10 *Biggin Hill Memorial Trust Museum* – another issue that has been discussed for a long time is the creation of a heritage centre and the Committee was informed that the proposal was now progressing. It would be in the vicinity of St George's Chapel which would remain as a place of worship.

7.11 *Press cuttings* - members receive copies of news reports about Biggin Hill Airport with their papers for each meeting. Members mentioned they were pleased to see the reports that Stephen Inch, a former employee of the Airport, had graduated through

officer training at the RAF College, Cranwell. It is good to be able to finish this report on a positive note.

John Bowden

Chairman