

## GATCOM

20 JANUARY 2022

### GATCOM STEERING GROUP – MATTERS CONSIDERED

#### REPORT BY CHAIRMAN

This paper summarises the matters considered by the GATCOM Steering Group at its meeting on 7 January 2022.

#### 1. UPDATE FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT (DfT)

1.1 The DfT gave an update on its current work and policy development. The DfT is hosting a series of discussion groups with members of the DfT's [Airspace and Noise Engagement Group \(ANEG\)](#), which has a broad range of interests represented, and other interested parties. The first session held in December was to discuss the night flights policy review. GATCOM's Lead Member for Noise was invited to participate in that session. More discussion groups are planned over the next couple of months focussing on the overarching noise policy and how noise should be measured; regulatory measures and enforcement; air quality and health effects looking at WHO guidelines and research; and land use planning. The views raised at these sessions will feed into the DfT's policy development thinking leading to the publication of a revised noise policy paper expected later in 2022.

1.2 It is also the Government's intention to publish, in the near future, an overarching aviation policy framework, taking broad look at the sector and challenges for aviation over the medium term.

#### Transfer of ICCAN's functions to the CAA

1.3 The DfT is continuing discussions with the CAA on the transfer of the majority of ICCAN's (Independent Commission for Civil Aviation Noise) functions to the CAA. The CAA is to take on its new duties from April 2022. The Government's funding of ICCAN will be transferred to the CAA.

1.4 In taking on the role the CAA is to set up a new Environmental Sustainability Panel to act as a 'critical friend' to the regulator, providing independent, expert technical advice to the CAA to ensure the environmental and sustainability interests are considered in the CAA's policy development. The CAA has, since the Steering Group meeting, commenced its [recruitment of a Panel Chair and Members](#).

1.5 GATCOM's request to the national body for airport consultative committees, UKACCs, to collectively look at the implications of the demise of ICCAN and to take forward views and concerns with the DfT and the CAA has been followed-up. This was the subject of discussion at the UKACCs Annual Meeting on 18 and 19 November 2021 when Airport Consultative Committee (ACC) Chairs and Secretaries had the opportunity to discuss with the DfT and the CAA the transfer of ICCAN's responsibilities to the CAA.

1.6 Whilst many other ACC Chairs shared the concerns of GATCOM about the demise of ICCAN there was no consensus as to whether ICCAN added value to the work of their airport or Committee but there were a number of issues that UKACCs collectively agreed should be addressed by the DfT and CAA. The principal concern related to independence and the ability of the CAA to take on the proposed dual role as regulator for the industry and responsible for the airspace change and modernisation processes and being able to give independent oversight. ACCs also have concerns that the demise of ICCAN might

adversely impact on future initiatives and have questioned whether future initiatives will have to be solely led, undertaken (and funded) by the DfT and the CAA which could potentially limit the scope to commission relevant research and initiatives. UKACCs also endorsed the ICCAN Commissioners' priorities to be taken forward (set out in their [letter](#) of 30 September to the Minister for Aviation).

1.7 UKACCs, together with other interested parties including community noise groups, was given the opportunity to feed in thoughts and ideas to the CAA's consultants, Green Park, on the skill sets needed for the new Environmental Sustainability Panel's Chair and Members and the emerging challenges in aviation sustainability and how should this be reflected in the skills of potential panel members. UKACCs is however pursuing the need for further discussion and engagement on the draft terms of reference for the new Panel.

1.8 The Steering Group appreciated this update but had continuing concerns about the lack of detailed information about how the functions of ICCAN will be mapped across to the CAA, how to ensure the independence of the new Panel and the CAA's work and how the Panel will measure and judge the impact of aviation activities on communities. The Steering Group felt there was a need for a champion for communities to be represented on the Panel. The Steering Group agreed therefore that I should write to the CAA to clearly articulate the concerns of members and to seek the opportunity to input to the draft terms of reference of the Panel.

1.9 The CAA has agreed to give an update on its work at the meeting (see item 5).

## **2. DFT SURVEY: INFORMATION GATHERING EXERCISE FROM AIRPORT CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS**

2.1 The DfT is seeking views of ACCs on the challenges they face on a range of issues, such as current government guidelines for ACCs, community engagement, funding arrangements, importance of diversity, impartiality and the sharing of best practice. GATCOM has been invited to give a collective response to the survey.

2.2 The Steering Group has given initial consideration to the survey questions and the comments received so far from member organisations. Many points were raised which the Secretariat is now building into the collective GATCOM response, a draft of which will be circulated to all GATCOM members in the next few weeks for comment and endorsement before submission by the deadline of 18 February. The DfT has advised that all findings from the survey will be anonymised and any proposed next steps will be shared with UKACC and its members, relevant organisations who complete the exercise and UK airports and airfields.

2.3 The survey questions prompted the Steering Group to consider other aspects of GATCOM's current membership and working practices and it was agreed that the time was right for GATCOM to hold an all member/support officer Away Day (similar to the first Away Day held in October 2019) to fully explore ideas and any potential changes. **It is therefore suggested** that arrangements be put in place to hold an Away Day later in the year.

## **3. BUSINESS & OPERATIONS UPDATE**

3.1 GAL provided an update on traffic levels at the airport over the last quarter. During October, November and December Gatwick handled around 1 million passengers each month. Aircraft movements (ATMs) ranged over the quarter between c.7,000 ATMs to c.10,000 ATMs. Gatwick is operating at about 70% below 2019 traffic levels.

3.2 The Steering Group heard that prior to the impact of the Omicron variant, there were a range of Government announcements during the quarter which were welcomed by GAL relating to easing of international travel restrictions and changes to testing requirements. However, the global spread of the Omicron variant saw restrictions reintroduced late Nov / early Dec which impacted on Gatwick's recovery and again eroded passenger confidence in air travel.

3.3 There had been positive steps to recovery generally in the latter half of 2022. There are 29 airlines currently operating at Gatwick compared with 42 operating in 2019. EasyJet remains the largest carrier by passenger volumes handling around 50% of Gatwick's passengers followed by British Airways and Tui with each handling around 10% of passengers. During December Emirates commenced operations to Dubai using A380 aircraft; Scoot, a subsidiary of Singapore Airlines, commenced services to Bangkok and the far east; Eastern Airways commenced the government subsidised public service obligation route to Newquay; and Jet2, Swiss International, Air Malta and Wiz Air, which has also secured a number of Norwegian slots, introduced new routes. British Airways' new airline, Euroflyer, will introduce 35 new destinations across Europe from next summer. Domestic routes continue to be the most popular and the most popular international routes are short haul services mainly to Europe - Spain, Italy, France and Ireland.

3.4 The Government's slot waiver consultation, an important factor for GAL in recovering traffic, has now closed. GAL submitted a response requesting the reinstatement of the 80/20 rule. The Government's decision is expected during January. The pace of Gatwick's recovery will depend on the outcome of the consultation and will also assist in planning the timing of reopening the South Terminal and the recruitment of staff.

3.5 The Steering Group was interested to learn of those airlines that were using sustainable aviation fuels (SAF). Members were encouraged that the inaugural Eastern Airways flight to and from Newquay had flown with a 35% mix of SAF as had easyJet flights from Gatwick to Glasgow during COP 26. It was also confirmed that most aircraft already have the capability to fly with up to a 50% SAF mix. However, a significant issue is the supply of and the production of SAF facilities in the UK. Some of the current supplies are obtained from the Netherlands but the Government and industry has invested in a SAF plant which is currently being built in Lincolnshire (the first in the UK) with the first SAF production expected in 2024.

### **Northern Runway Pre-application Consultation**

3.6 GAL is pleased with the levels of engagement and response to the pre-application consultation from a wide range of stakeholders, across the region. The several thousand comments are currently being coded by a specialist coding company to then enable GAL to review and consider how to address all comments received. This part of the process will take several months.

3.7 GAL thanked GATCOM for its carefully considered response. The Steering Group noted however that the Environmental and Amenity Groups' representative had at the Special Meeting reserved judgement on the response agreed by GATCOM until community groups had seen the amended response. It was confirmed at the Steering Group that community groups could not support GATCOM's submitted response.

## **4. SECTION 106 AGREEMENT**

4.1 The Steering Group has considered the [Secretariat's report](#) on the outcome of the independent verification process of GAL's [2020 Annual Monitoring Report](#) of its S106 agreement. It was noted that as a result of the independent audit, the External

Consultant found that all ten out of ten Obligations verified were found to be on track and that there were no issues identified during the review requiring recommendations by the consultant.

4.2 There were no matters that the Steering Group felt needed to be brought to the attention of GATCOM. The Annual Monitoring of GAL's progress on delivering its obligations is a valuable means of providing transparency and confidence in GAL's work, an approach that GATCOM has advocated over many years and wishes to see continued in future agreements.

4.3 The existing section 106 agreement expired at the end of December 2021 but contained a requirement for the parties to the agreement to commence a process of negotiation. GAL confirmed it is still in discussion with Crawley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council on the roll forward and update of the agreement recognising the length of time for a new agreement and the impact of the pandemic on Gatwick's business and operations. Notwithstanding those discussions, both GAL and WSCC gave reassurances that they will continue to work towards the obligations in the expired agreement and the intention is to sign an updated s106, once agreement between the parties has been reached.

## **5. AIRSPACE UPDATE**

5.1 GAL hosted the Annual Airspace Public Meeting on 3 December via Zoom video conference. The virtual meeting had been held over a lunch period which had been recommended by ICCAN as a way of reaching out to a wider audience than those parties who normally engaged on airspace and noise issues. I am pleased that many GATCOM members had joined the event which covered a range of topics including a high level overview of current operations and the impact of the pandemic on Gatwick's operations, the airspace modernisation programme, noise during the night period, route 4 and the airline noise performance table and details of GAL's ongoing engagement with airlines to improve noise performance.

5.2 Participants were able to submit questions in advance as well as during the event. GAL has placed on its [website](#) the presentation slides used, meeting note and the questions and answers.

5.3 The Steering Group's feedback on the event was given the need to hold the event virtually, it maximised the opportunities for the public to engage. GAL was urged however to revert to a physical format for the event as that provided the public with greater opportunity to ask questions of a wider range of industry partners.

### **FASI-South**

5.4 GAL is progressing its work on the FASI-South airspace modernisation project and is currently at Stage 2a in the CAA's CAP1616 airspace change process. During December GAL hosted two engagement events to refresh stakeholders on the approach and methodology for developing and assessing the comprehensive list of options set out in September and update on GAL's progress. GAL is planning a further round of engagement in February to review the outcomes of the work to develop a comprehensive list of options - which will be completed by then - and the list of options to be explored further. GAL intend to issue details of the list of potential options at least two weeks in advance of the engagement events to allow stakeholders sufficient time to examine the potential options and thus enable constructive and effective input at the event.

5.5 GAL is currently considering whether there is scope to revisit the timeline for the project to allow greater time for stakeholders to input to the development of design options. The Stage 2 gateway meeting with the CAA is currently scheduled for July and

GAL is looking at the potential to delay that gateway meeting until Q4. An indicative timetable of the UK's airspace modernisation projects has been provided in the [CAA's 2021 Annual Progress Report](#) published on 6 January 2022.

5.6 The Steering Group has noted the potential change to the timeline for GAL's work. It also believed that GAL needed to be sensitive in its approach in releasing the comprehensive list of potential options information so as not to create unintended concern amongst communities. It was suggested that GAL give some thought to giving weightings on the possible and probable options to help address this concern. There was also a need for GATCOM to understand the linkages between GAL's work and that of Heathrow and how the cumulative effects of changes would be articulated to communities. This is a point that needs to be explored at the GATCOM meeting with the CAA and ACOG (Airspace Change Organising Group).

## **6. GATCOM's INDICATIVE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

6.1 The Steering Group received an [update](#) from the Secretariat on GATCOM's work over the past nine months since agreeing its Indicative Work Programme in April 2021. A number of the topics and objectives included in the Work Programme have been considered which included the Committee's detailed consideration of Gatwick's growth in April 2021, the review of the night flights regime at a workshop and two special meetings and a special meeting to consider GAL's Northern Runway project pre-application consultation.

6.2 The Steering Group will consider the suggested draft 2022/23 Indicative Work Programme at its next meeting. Suggested new topics for consideration included GAL's plans and targets to achieve carbon emission reductions reflecting the outcomes of the Government's Jet Zero consultation when published, management and monitoring of non-development related growth, and building a better understanding of the wider community's view of the benefits arising from Gatwick's expansion.

### **RECOMMENDED**

- (1) That GATCOM notes the deliberations of the Steering Group; and
- (2) That an all member/support officer Away Day be arranged for later in the year.

**TOM CROWLEY**  
**CHAIRMAN**