

## **Nottingham East Midlands Airport Consultative Committee**

### **Chairman's Report – November 2003**

#### **Chairman's Foreword**

I write this report as the first Independent Chairman of the Nottingham East Midlands International Airport Independent Consultative Committee. This is a big title, but the role simply requires me to manage the meetings and agenda in an impartial, independent manner. The meetings are invariably interesting, lively and informative. The eclectic composition of the Committee ensures that discussions address the concerns and interests of the local population; be they environmental, economic, commercial or issues expressed by users of the airport. A significant proportion of the business at each meeting is taken up discussing the environmental impact of the Airport. The noise climate in particular and especially the night-time noise climate is often a major focus of attention.

Significant measures have been introduced by the Airport to both ameliorate and monitor the noise climate. These measures include the introduction of noise preferred routes and noise and tracking monitoring regimes. Operators working in partnership with the airport to address environmental impact have undertaken to modernise their fleets with quieter aircraft. The airport has also introduced penalties on those operators who infringe the regulations they have introduced. Proceeds from these penalties provide financial support for community initiatives and developments. The noise amelioration and monitoring measures are explained in more detail within this report.

The Department for Transport has also addressed and continues to address the question of the noise climate at the Airport. The then Secretary of State, Stephen Byers, responding to requests that the Airport should be designated, convened an Independent Panel to examine the night time noise climate and to investigate how the impact of night flights could be ameliorated. The panel was comprised of representatives from North West Leicestershire District Council, interest groups, local authorities, user groups, the operators and the Airport. No consensus emerged from the meetings of this panel, but the Airport tabled a night time noise policy, which has become known as the '10 point plan'. The Minister David Jamieson, who was overseeing the review, endorsed this policy as being an acceptable strategy to improve and regulate the environmental impact. He decided against designating the Airport and in the process of so doing required the Consultative Committee to monitor the implementation and operation of the '10 point plan'. This requirement is a standing agenda item at every meeting of the Committee.

A senior civil servant has also recently visited the airport to discuss with me, in addition to other business, the modus operandi of the Consultative Committee and to examine the monitoring of the '10 point plan'. The purpose of his visit was to produce a report for the current Secretary of State Alistair Darling. I am therefore aware that the Airport and particularly its night

time noise climate is constantly under review and scrutiny; and not merely by those interest groups who have representation on the Committee.

But the Consultative Committee's role and remit is much more than scrutinizers of environmental impact; vitally important though this role may be. More than 7000 people are employed in and around the Airport with many thousands more in associated and related operations. The contribution of the Airport to the economy of the East Midlands Region is very considerable and for the adjoining local authorities the jobs it provides are vital for their own economic well being. It follows, therefore, that the aircraft and freight operators are also represented on the Committee along with local authorities, and representatives from business and commerce. Each of these groups brings their own interests, individual knowledge and expertise to the work and deliberations of the Committee.

Many thousands of local people also use the Airport each year for business, holiday or domestic purposes. This group also has a vested interest in what is discussed at meetings and therefore has representation on the Committee. Their own specific interests such as disability provision, arrival and departure arrangements and parking accessibility issues are topics which they ensure are fully addressed at meetings.

The composition of the Committee is therefore one of very disparate specific interests, but, surprisingly perhaps in the vast majority of cases agreement is brokered by discussion and consensus and a corporate view is endorsed on most issues.

The Committee has determined, for example, that meetings should not be held in public. They wish, however, that as much information as possible should be made available to those interested in its work. Approved minutes and future agendas are therefore published on the Airport website. Bearing in mind that an environmental report (including all noise complaints), a planning report, a community liaison report and a statistics report dealing with passenger numbers, change and growth, are all standing items on the agenda, the public in general are kept fully informed of the business undertaken by the Committee.

I conclude by saying this is a Consultative Committee. It has no executive or decision making powers, other than those related to it's own constitution. Given this situation I consider much is achieved by the dialogue and exchange of views – sometimes very strongly expressed – which characterise the nature of the meetings. I also consider that the Airport listens to what is said and where possible responds in a positive and constructive way to issues raised. The interests of the public are well served by the representatives of the individual organisations which comprise the Committee. Although no one ever seems to leave meetings totally satisfied with all the outcomes, I am absolutely sure that the process of consultation is being pursued in an effective, constructive and productive manner.

### **The Committee Structure**

The Independent Consultative Committee is established in order that the management of East Midlands Airport can take into account the views of interested parties when making decisions concerning the management, operation and development of the Airport, and keep those parties informed of matters affecting them. The Committee fulfils the requirements of Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 for the Airport management to provide adequate facilities for consultation.

Consultation is not intended to detract from the responsibility of management to manage the Airport. It is a positive and interactive process through which the concerns of interested parties can be taken into account, aiming to allow the efficient operation of the Airport, whilst moderating its impact on local communities. It is a means of keeping all interested parties adequately informed of matters affecting them, of providing an opportunity to reconcile any differences of view that may arise, and an opportunity for resolving difficulties through voluntary action.

Membership of the Committee is open to representatives of three groups, namely airport users, local authorities and local interest organisations. In addition, the Committee is attended by appropriate members of the Airport Company. Management attendance is in an advisory and presentational capacity only, and these representatives do not have voting powers.

The Committee is chaired by an Independent Chairman who is appointed to hold office for a minimum period of three years. The Vice-Chairman is elected at a General Meeting and is selected from the three different categories of member groups. It is rotated every two years between the three categories so that each category is represented in each position once in every six years.

### **Continued Growth and Expansion**

Over the past two years passenger numbers at EMA have risen significantly, growing from 2.3m in 2001 to an estimated 4.5million in 2003. This has been driven primarily by the commencement of operations by two low cost operators namely Go (now Easyjet) and bmibaby. These figures have accelerated the Airport once more into the UK's top ten, ranking it as the 9<sup>th</sup> busiest in 2002. This growth has obviously brought with it an increase in the number of services and destinations on offer. Last summer EMA provided services to 30 scheduled domestic and European destinations. The inclusive tour and charter side of the business has also remained constant, accounting for roughly half of the Airport's passenger traffic. This bucks a national trend, which saw passenger numbers dip significantly following the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks in the US. In the last two years there has been steady growth in the range of charter destinations on offer including most significantly the introduction of a weekly long-haul service to Amritsar in India. This flight is already attracting wide support from the Indian communities throughout the East Midlands region.

EMA is also now widely established as the UK's number one 'pure cargo' Airport handling almost 230,000 tonnes of freight and mail in 2002. It is the

main UK base for express giant DHL who opened a £45 million freight handling hub on site in 2001. This operation brings significant economic benefits to the region most notably job creation.

It is this significant cargo operation which remains the predominant concern of many ICC members. The main reason for this being that much of the activity is during the night and many of the cargo aircraft tend to be older and noisier than their passenger counterparts.

### **Future Development of Air Transport**

Over the past two years members have been kept abreast of the Government's plans to publish a White Paper on the Future Development of Air Transport throughout the UK. Following publication of the Government's consultation document in relation to this, Chris Cain from the Department of Transport gave a presentation to the ICC, focusing particularly on key issues for the Midlands and proposals which impact upon East Midlands Airport. All ICC members had the opportunity to respond to the consultation document in their own right.

### **Runway Extension**

The Airport submitted a planning application for a further extension to the existing runway in August 2000 along with a detailed environmental statement. Due to the length of time that has passed since the original submission, NWLDC has asked the Airport to update the environmental statement based on the most up to date traffic forecasts. The Committee has concerns regarding the possible environmental implications of a further runway extension and has asked to be kept fully informed of any changes to the original environmental statement.

### **Terminal Expansion**

The terminal building at the Airport has undergone a whole range of changes over a relatively short period as it has strived to accommodate the growing number of passengers. This has included a new check-in hall with an additional 20 desks, an extension to the international and domestic departure lounges and an extension to the arrivals hall including new baggage carousels.

The Committee has voiced concerns about how the rapid growth of the Airport has affected the experience for passengers. This has included concerns about the length of time it takes to retrieve baggage after landing and the way the Airport deals with passenger feedback. Following feedback from the ICC changes have been made to the way in which the Airport analyses comment cards and the Airport agreed to work with the airlines and handling agents to maintain levels of customer service. Tours of the Airport and its new facilities have been made available to Committee members.

The Airport is planning a new terminal, adjacent to the exiting one, which it is hoped will be operational by 2007.

## **Noise**

**Complaints** – The Committee is given a comprehensive report at each of the ICC meetings of all of the complaints received about airport operations. This includes information such as number of complaints and complainants, their origination, reason for complaint and time of day. Generally complaints follow the same trend peaking over the summer months. However figures show that complaints are declining falling by 22% in 2002 and a further 16% in 2003. The Airport is committed to responding to complaints within 14 days

**Training** – Training and the relatively large number of complaints it generates, continues to attract high levels of concern among ICC members. Although the Committee accepts that training is necessary, that EMA is one of the few UK airports where training is facilitated and that it is a significant source of revenue for the Airport, various members have suggested on different occasions that the Airport look at training flight programmes and protocol. The Airport has responded to some of the concerns by banning training on Sundays, at night and on public holidays.

**Noise Preferred Routes** – Following extensive consultation with local communities new routes were introduced for departing aircraft in March 2001, which aim to direct aircraft away from built up areas so that they overfly the minimum number of people. The Airport is able to monitor the routes flown by all aircraft via its state-of-the-art noise and track monitoring system and this information is reported back to the Committee. The Airport set itself the target of reaching an average 90% compliance on each of the four departure paths in the first 12 months. This target has been reached and exceeded and compliance is now averaging in excess of 95%. The average for 2003 was 96%. Representatives from Kegworth have pointed out that owing to the proximity to the runway end of the village, NPRs were of limited benefit in the village. Now that the NPRs have been implemented for a substantial period the Committee has also asked the Airport to consider reducing the tolerance from 1500m to 1200m.

**Noise and Track Monitoring** – Introduced at a cost of £150,000 the Airport now records from radar where aircraft fly and how noisy they are. The Airport uses this information to ensure that airlines fly the NPRs accurately and also to enforce maximum noise limits on departing aircraft. This information is reported to the ICC at each meeting so they can see which airlines are best flying the NPRs and which aircraft and airlines are the noisiest.

**Sound Insulation Grant Scheme** – In 2001, the Airport introduced a Sound Insulation Grant Scheme which offers grants towards the cost of secondary glazing and loft insulation. As at other UK airports, this is calculated using the Airport's noise footprint, and is based on 5 year scheme, so that those most affected are eligible first.

**Noise Penalty Scheme and EMA Community Fund** – Since June 2001 the Airport has imposed maximum noise limits on those aircraft that depart at night. Any aircraft that infringes the maximum noise limits is fined accordingly.

These fines are ploughed back directly into the East Midlands Airport Community Fund which aims to support projects within a ten mile radius of the Airport. The Fund is administered by an independent committee, which comprises ICC representatives from each of the three counties surrounding the Airport. Since its inception it has donated more than £70,000 to local community groups.

727s – In a bid to reduce the noise impact of the night-time cargo operation, DHL, the largest freight carrier at EMA, has pledged that its entire fleet of 727s will be replaced by the end of 2003, with the quieter, more modern 757 aircraft. Evidence already shows that this aircraft attracts significantly fewer complaints and the fact that the aircraft is larger means DHL can airlift more freight without having to increase the number of ATMs.

### **Designation**

Following NWLDC's application for designation of EMA under section 78 of the Civil Aviation Act, a working party was convened in response to the Minister of Aviation's request that efforts be made to find a local solution. The working party comprised 3 representatives each from the Local Authority and the Airport and 4 each from the Airport operators and local interest groups – many of those representatives were also ICC members. Despite numerous meetings the body had been unable to reach a consensus on the Airport's proposals for noise alleviation measures. The Minister subsequently decided against designating EMA, deciding instead that the Airport's voluntary noise control measures were adequate. The ICC now has a role to play in ensuring that the Airport meets all of the environmental objectives it has committed to.

### **Controlled Airspace**

The Committee has been told that the Airport has made an approach to the Civil Aviation Authority to extend the Airport's zone of controlled airspace. Any expansion would have a number of important consequences, most notably it would allow the Airport to alter arrival procedures, thus reducing the level of noise. A public consultation has been undertaken by the Airport and all Committee members have been invited to comment.

### **Disabled Initiatives**

Input from disabled groups remains extremely important to the Airport. As a result two new members were elected to the Committee – Mrs Pat Taylor, who represents the 9,000 partially sighted and blind individuals in the country and Mr Ken Harrington who is a wheelchair user. As a direct result of many of Mrs Taylor's recommendations the Airport has introduced new signage in the terminal, which is blue with a yellow background. This is designed to help those with visual impairments who can see colour contrasts and read large print. Mrs Taylor has also helped with staff training which has helped raise awareness of the visually impaired among staff and the difficulties they encounter.

### **Surface Access Issues**

The ICC is kept abreast of all developments on the Airport site and those in surrounding areas which will impact upon the Airport. In March 2002 the

Committee was told about the Regional Planning Guidance for the East Midlands. This document sets out the broad planning policy for the region, including the Airport and includes contributions from many organisations. The RPG provided for further development of EMA within its boundaries, subject to rigorous assessment of the full range of impacts, including the social and economic factors. Other development around the Airport and Junction 24 had been largely directed at brown-field and urban sites and emphasis was also placed on improving surface access.

Surface Access continues to be one of the main concerns for Committee members. The Airport addresses many issues relating to Surface Access through the Transport Forum, on which the ICC has a representative. The Airport's own 5-year Surface Access Strategy includes ambitious targets for the reduction of private car use, improving bus links and increasing facilities for cyclists. Members of the Committee are particularly concerned with the lack of public transport facilities for those living in the rural communities surrounding the Airport. Despite the Airport sharing these concerns the Airport's strategy gives priority to supporting services used by both passengers and Airport employees.

The issues surrounding the Parkway Station at Radcliffe-on-Soar are ongoing with agreement yet to be reached between Midland Mainline and Powergen. The Airport and the ICC are both supportive of the new station believing it will encourage more passengers particularly to use the train as an alternative to their own cars.

### **Employment**

The ICC is kept up to date with all of the research activity carried out by the Airport. The latest employment survey, which was carried out in 2002, showed that around 7,000 staff are now working on or near the Airport site, with the majority of these originating from South Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. Employment will continue to increase as new jobs are created on Pegasus Business Park and by the expansion of the low-cost carriers.

Given the increasing number of the employment opportunities available on the site, the Airport has for the past two years organised a Jobs Fair in partnership with the Employment Service. A whole range of employers have taken part each year offering positions in areas as diverse as passenger services, catering, retail and warehousing. This event has proved a tremendous success with around 10,000 people believed to have attended in 2003.