

EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Exeter Airport Consultative Committee held at Exeter Airport on 14 July 2021

Attendance list at end of document

The meeting started at 10.05 am and ended at 11.45 am

1 Declaration of Interests

Councillor Dean Stewart, Ottery St Mary Town Council, Personal, member of the Aviation Consultancy Group.

2 To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2021 were confirmed as a true record.

3 Matters arising - Chair's comments

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed gratitude to Andrew Bell for attending and wished Steve Wiltshire a speedy recovery following an emergency appendectomy. He also thanked Democratic Services for the secretarial cover, Will Campbell for providing the venue and the airport for facilitating the meeting.

Matters arising:

- (a) To discuss the decision made by Exeter ACC not to reply to the Treasury's Consultation on Airport Departure Duty (APD)

Consideration was given to the decision following an email received from a member of the group who supported green issues. In response to the email the Chair reported he had contacted the UKACC to enquire about the decisions from the other ACC's and it was acknowledged that they were avoiding the consultation as they did not know what the community thought.

The Chair advised it was important to take a balanced view when considering the practicalities of reducing air travel because connectivity was important to the South West and referred to the email he had sent comparing the cost of flying with the train and asked members to consider the viability of travelling by train when aircrafts are becoming more fuel efficient.

The Chair asked for a show of hands from members who would have supported Exeter ACC decision. In response David Harvey raised concern about hearing the views from other members and advised that APD was only one issue. He referred to the pandemic and green issues and the difficulty of estimating the impact on what any initiative would have on travel.

Henry Gent advised he had no issues with the RCA submission. He referred to car fuel taxes and the cost of petrol compared to the cost of kerosene and highlighted that APD was a low rate of tax for fuel and asked members to bear in mind that aviation had high omissions of carbon dioxide per km of travel but agreed it did need reforming to improve connectivity. He also referred to several weaknesses in the proposal.

Chris Daly advised during Covid-19 passenger traffic had been reduced by over 90% and spite that figure over 3/4m people still travelled through the London airports every month which confirmed business travellers still need to fly. He advised that the issues with APD is more about parity with being competitive with Europe. He referred to the omission figures stated by other members and emphasised the need for properly audited figures and reminded members that they were required to discuss the function and operations of the airport and its relationship with its community.

Dean Stewart reported that Ottery St Mary had declared a climate emergency and had commissioned two reports from Exeter University looking at efficient ways of travelling and heating homes. He highlighted about regional distribution of wealth on the news and raised concerns about the lack of information for the south west and suggested this area was seen a tourist destination rather than commercial. There was a need to make sure the south west had an economic impact for the future and expressed a strong view for any incentive to improve the south west.

Dave Montgomery was in support of flights to regional areas as there was a lack of infrastructure to travel by car and a lack of good connectivity with trains.

(b) Regional and overseas flights – will members be travelling this summer?

The Chair referred to differing sets of advice from the FTO and DfT and the difficulty it provides for the airlines and tour operators compared with other countries. He raised the question whether more people would travel in October/November when the hospitality trade quietens in this country and whether there was still an uncertainty of travelling by air.

4 **Verbal report from Andrew Bell, CEO, Regional and City Airports**

The CEO, Regional and City Airports raised the issue of the lack of confidence of people travelling overseas due to the current situation of amber countries and the restrictions which was measured by current bookings over the summer season. He advised overall, assuming the country moves forward on the same basis with regards the amber countries it was good as it was going to get.

He outlined that in his opinion testing would continue to be part of travel and face masks would be worn in the airport and on aircrafts for some time to come, definitely over the winter period and into next year.

Key areas of focus included:

- Border control. He referred to the current border issues at Heathrow and Border Force manning E Gates.
- Domestic flights that had been up and running for some time now had been reasonably successful. It was anticipated to see an increased capacity in the autumn.
- International flights with TUI and Ryan Air would commence next week on a gradual basis.
- Exeter Airport would operate as a passenger testing facility to cater for different requirements to travel.

The CEO was pleased and proud to announce that Exeter Airport was going to be the host airport for an important research project to progress the viability of electric flight

which would start in August. He outlined the 2zero project and said this was a small step in the future of aviation in demonstrating the viability of electric airplanes and offers the opportunity for Exeter Airport and the wider business, education and research community to become the 'go to' location for the skills and advice.

Dean Stewart asked a question about whether Exeter Airport was encouraging Flybe that Exeter was the place to be rather than Birmingham. The CEO confirmed that the airport and local authorities were working hard to persuade them but emphasised the future of Exeter Airport was bright with or without them.

A question was raised about whether the electric flight was a passenger flight. In response the CEO advised it was an experimental flight and not a commercial flight.

Andrew Wood, EDDC's Service Lead – Growth, Development and Prosperity highlighted that the government had published its Transport Decarbonisation Strategy that day. This included commitments to end the sale of new diesel powered HGVs from 2040 for example. There was already evidence in the locality of companies starting to switch to electric fleets, notably Amazon. There was also the challenge of decarbonising how we heat homes for which the district heating project was key. He highlighted that 2zero project would trial electric flight between Exeter and Newquay Airports with the first test flight was due to take place in August. This is a small step in itself but is important symbolically in helping to prove the feasibility of regional electric flight. It was hoped that the Airport would develop as a test best for sustainable aviation going forward.

The CEO was proud to report that the G7 US Air Force was based at Exeter Airport last month bringing valuable income and exposure to the US military of the Airport's handling capabilities.

Members noted that the airport hours would be increasing. Opening earlier and closing later which would create operational noise from TUI aircrafts, something the surrounding areas would not have heard for the past 18 months.

Masks will be expected to be worn from 19 July in the airport. Screens and PPE will also continue to be used.

5 **Verbal report from Stephen Wiltshire, Operations Director, Exeter Airport**

In the absence of the Operations Director the verbal report was deferred to the next meeting.

6 **Verbal report from Will Campbell, General Manager, Exeter Aerospace**

The General Manager reported that Exeter Aerospace had been up and running over the last six months with 30 permanent employees and was currently interviewing to employ more staff. There was currently 24 engineers on short term contracts due to the ad hoc work but this was hoped to improve.

From a customer base the hangers were full with aircraft from local businesses from Eastern Airlines, Blue Island and BA City Flyer. Work had started to pick up supporting Paint Facilities in East Midlands for Air Livery and Airborne Colours as well as other

support for operators at other locations such as Bristol. Work was very reactive at the moment but there was a need for long term contracts to help plan and build the business.

7 **Verbal report from Anne McLaird, Director, Aviation Southwest**

Anne McLaird explained that Aviation Southwest was a small a training school based at Exeter Airport that trained commercial pilots from zero experience and also private pilots training. They were fortunate in that they only closed for business during the first lockdown. Thereafter they were able to continue offering commercial flight training.

Anne updated members that after Brexit the school had to engage with Europe to enable pilots to obtain both their Europe licence and the UK licence. They had now set up a base in Malta for their EASA students for the final part of their training.

We were successful in an application to the Rural Payments Agency for a grant to purchase 3 aircraft, this will enable us to increase staff numbers to include 3 new Flight Instructors and another Operations Assistant.

8 **Verbal report from Ian Payne, Operations Director, Devon Air Ambulance Trust**

In the absence of the Operations Director the verbal report was deferred to the next meeting.

9 **To discuss the findings of an IPSOS Mori poll commissioned by the DfT on the problems encountered by Heathrow ACC during the third runway enquiry**

The Chair advised about a talk given recently by the Dft to the ACCs about the issues that Heathrow ACC had during the third runway enquiry. As a result the Dft had commissioned a survey to find out what the public thought about the representation with the airport and that the general opinion from the result was that the public did not know what the ACC stood for.

The Chair raised the importance of promoting the Exeter Airport Consultative Committee to make the public aware of its role and who is their representative. He referred to the handout and advised it can be sent to members as an electronic copy and asked members to put a notice on the town and parish notice boards to help promote the importance of this committee.

In response Dean Stewart supported the importance of promoting the Exeter Airport Consultative Committee and emphasised the need to promote on social media.

10 **Noise report for the airport**

In the absence of the Operations Director the noise report was deferred to the next meeting.

11 **Any other business**

Gary Collier referred to minute 54 and asked Andy Wood to forward his presentation to him as he was not included in the distribution list. In response Andy Wood advised he would send it direct to his email address.

Andrew Wood gave an update on the Long Lane enhancement works. The Silverdown Lane works to the rear of the Future Skills Centre were due to complete in July. This would create a diversionary route to enable the Long Lane works to start which would widen the road to 6.5m. The works are expected to be completed by summer 2022 with the Silverdown Lane link being retained to help create a bus loop and improved cycling and pedestrian access.

12 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the next Exeter Airport Consultative Committee meeting would be held on 8 September at 10am at a venue to be confirmed.

Attendance List

Richard Bartlett (Chair)
Chris Daly (Vice Chair)
David Harvey
Margaret Hall
Les Bayliss
Chris Scanes
Jeremy Wollen
Henry Gent
David Montgomery
Will Campbell
Anne McLaird
Andrew McLaird
P Hayward
Gary Collier
Dean Stewart
Janvrin Edbrooke

Officers in attendance:

Andrew Wood, Service Lead - Growth Development and Prosperity
Wendy Harris, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies:

Ian Payne
Phil Knowles
Stephen Wiltshire
Jane Chant

Chairman

Date: