

GACC NEWSLETTER

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September 2020

Dear Members

GACC AGM

In light of the on-going COVID pandemic and our desire to engage with our members in the most open and effective manner, your Committee has concluded that, in line with many other organisations, the GACC AGM, which would normally be held in November 2020, will be deferred until government advice allows us to hold meetings in the normal manner. If any member is concerned about this we would be happy to discuss the position.

Airport developments

Since our August newsletter the number of flights using Gatwick has marginally increased however Gatwick has announced that in August, usually one of the airport's busiest months, passenger numbers are over 80% down when compared with the numbers of passengers Gatwick saw that month in 2019. Current numbers (mid-September) are around 200 flights a day which will drop off significantly when the tourist season finishes at the end of the month.

The airport's recently published results, for the six months to 30 June 2020, showed an overall decline in passenger numbers of 66%, leading to a 61% fall in revenue and a loss of £321m. The airport does not now expect traffic to reach 2019 levels until 2024. Over 740 employees have left the business and the airport is consulting on a further 600 job losses. Notwithstanding these results, the airport still expects to take forward in 2021 the planning process to bring its emergency runway into routine use.

Despite GACC's requests, the airport confirmed in August that it was resuming 24-hour operations. Many of you will have noticed that there are now again a significant number of night flights. We are very disappointed that Gatwick has not done more to ensure flights are only scheduled during the day.

Building back better

Back in June we wrote to Gatwick's CEO asking the airport to do everything possible to minimise the impacts of its operations as flight numbers again started to increase. Our specific proposals included that the airport should remain closed at night, that airlines should prioritise flying the quietest aircraft in their fleets and that air traffic control operators should disperse aircraft and adopt noise-minimising arrival and departure procedures given airspace is less congested.

We finally received a response on 17 August. Regrettably, the airport's view is that there is no need for it to take any additional actions to minimise noise impacts as it recovers. It has not responded positively to any of our proposals. We have therefore raised them with the Noise Management Board and the airport's Consultative Committee and will continue to seek a more positive approach from the airport.

GATCOM

The next GATCOM meeting is on 15th October and as mentioned above we will be raising our concerns once again at this meeting which we understand will be focussed on Build Back Better.

Noise Management Board

As previously reported, meetings of the new Noise Management Board (NMB) will re-start shortly. GACC participates in the NMB Community Forum, which next meets on 23 September, and represents community and environmental groups on the NMB Executive Board, which will meet on 21 October.

We plan to raise a range of issues including arrangements to minimise noise impacts as the airport recovers, as set out above, and the poor progress Gatwick has made delivering its Noise Action Plan commitments, discussed below.

If there are other issues you'd like GACC to raise at either of these meetings please let us know.

Gatwick's Noise Action Plan

Gatwick's Noise Action Plan (NAP) is the main legal mechanism by which the airport's noise impacts are supposed to be managed and reduced. The current plan (the third) was approved by the government in February 2019 and runs until 2024. GACC and other community and environmental groups submitted numerous comments on the draft plan before it was approved, most of which were ignored.

Nonetheless there are some worthwhile actions in the current NAP and it is important that they are delivered fully and promptly. Gatwick recently issued a progress report on the NAP. This claimed that 49 of the 58 actions were "on track" and the other nine actions "partially on track". This didn't align with our understanding of the situation so we've carried out our assessment of progress. In our view only 28 actions are on track, 21 are partially on track and nine are not on track. Of the key actions that have real potential to reduce noise we think only two are on track, five are partially on track and two are not on track.

Our conclusion is that Gatwick has made little progress in implementing its NAP and is particularly badly behind schedule on the most important actions. We appreciate that COVID has delayed some work, but many of the critical actions that remain outstanding were due to have been completed in 2019.

Given these widely differing assessments we've asked for an independent review of progress to date. We'll continue to pursue this through GATCOM, the NMB and NaTMAG and, if necessary, ask government to step in and ensure Gatwick delivers on its commitments.

Noise Line

Gatwick finally re-installed an automated telephone system for reporting noise complaints in 2018 after an absence of three years. At the recent NATMAG meeting GAL suggested that the line may be withdrawn as part of the post-Covid cost reviews since its use was low.

The view of NATMAG members was that the line was poorly promoted by GAL and that its removal would disadvantage those without internet or with certain disabilities. Local authorities and community groups were asked to assist in promulgating the telephone number. Please pass it on to anyone you feel would benefit.

The number is **01293 311568**.

Consultation

GACC has responded to the CAA's consultation on airspace reclassification, [here](#).

National aviation policy

We continue to work with a range of other groups nationally to try to ensure that community and environmental views are heard and fully considered. We recently co-signed a **letter** to the then Aviation Minister summarising the aircraft noise issues that we believe the government should address. Since we wrote the Aviation Minister has been changed and is now Robert Courts, MP for Whitney in Oxfordshire.

GACC committee

Given her other commitments Lisa Morris has decided to step down from GACC's Committee. We are very grateful for Lisa's contribution and wish her well.

If you might be interested in joining the Committee and helping fight Gatwick's noise and other environmental impacts please let us know.

Joining GACC: please spread the word

Gatwick has been quieter this summer compared to recent years. But we are seeing an increase in noise and emissions, and the threat of the airport's unnecessary and ill-considered expansion plans hang over all local communities and those under flight paths. Gatwick wants to grow to almost the size Heathrow is today, with devastating noise, congestion and climate change consequences.

Please encourage your friends, family and neighbours to join GACC and help protect the interests of communities all around the airport. Information on how to do so can be found [here](#).

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