

Blackness Area Community Council

Minutes of Meeting Wednesday 16th March 2016, in the Community Hall

Attendees:

Council members: Merv Archibald (MA), Nick Paul (NP), Martin Watt (MW), Sharman Faulds (SF), Kathryn James (KJ) and around 30 members of the public were also present.

Sergeant Andrea Campbell from Police Scotland attended to deliver the Police report.

In addition, 3 members of staff from Edinburgh Airport Ltd (EAL) attended to deliver a presentation on the recent TUTUR flight trial: Gordon Robertson (GR) - Director of Communications, Gayle Barclay - Communications Admin and Sandy Leggatt (SL) - National Air Traffic Control Services (NATS) Manager.

Apologies: Martin Knott(MK), Cllr A Mahoney

MA opened the meeting by welcoming such an unusually high turnout of people from among the Community who had come along this evening, and introduced himself and the other Community Councillors. MA also advised that the meeting agenda would be rearranged so that the items with visiting speakers would be dealt with first – ie the Police report followed by the Flight Path Trial report and discussion, with other items following on from that.

Police report

No reports of any crimes in the area since the last meeting. There is an update on the lamping activity previously reported, that would be made available in the written report to the CC. No update available on the spate of burglaries from last year, although it is possible that one item – a tractor – has been recovered.

Edinburgh Airport Flight Path Trial

GR delivered a presentation on the results of the TUTUR trial and in particular the recently published Community Noise Report for Blackness at the request of BACC. He advised he was happy to answer questions on the trial and also current noise issues being experienced.

The trial took place between 25th June and 28th October 2015, with the last TUTUR flight on 25th October. Edinburgh airport (EDI) is a growing airport with capacity issues, particularly at peak times, and needs to try and ensure that runway capacity can cope with both incoming and departing flights. Key way of managing this is to redesign the airspace to allow more departures, hence the TUTUR flight path trial for Westerly departures. Physically EDI has only one runway, but it is referred to as runway 24 for Westerly departures and 06 for Easterly ones, as for safety reasons a runway can only be used by arriving and departing aircraft moving in the same direction. Planes take off into the wind, so around 70% of the time, the Westerly runway (24) is in operation with planes taking off towards Livingston, with the balance taking off from runway (06) to the East over Crammond.

Reasons for the TUTUR trial – designed to test if route is flyable, can 1 minute separation between aircraft be achieved, what does it do to emissions on the ground and what is the effect on general performance of the network. Air Traffic Control (ATC) at EDI is responsible for planes until they reach 6000 feet and then control is handed over to ATC centre at Prestwick. SIDs or Standard Instrument Departure routes are like “motorway on ramps”, the sky is “full of motorways” that planes use, and SIDs are designed to get the planes into the “motorway” network in the air as safely and effectively as possible.

GR then referred to a slide presentation noting he would be happy to take questions as he progressed or at the end. He also agreed to send the Powerpoint slides presentation to the BACC.

First objective of trial:

Test use of RNAV1 technology. At the moment, no EDI SIDs are RNAV compliant, as they were designed in 1970's for older navigation technology. GR said that RNAV is like satnav in a car, it follows waypoints along a route, acts to tighten up the routes, makes the planes more accurate when following the route. TUTUR was the first test of RNAV technology at EDI.

In general the trial found that route could be flown, but there were some circumstances when it could not with some anomalies that need to be investigated further - therefore, an “Amber” result on a Red, Amber, Green basis. About 4.7% of aircraft were off track, and could not make the turns satisfactorily. If the airport wished to make the TUTUR route permanent that would have to be fixed. This may mean a change in route, or different aircraft using it. Need to fix that before the CAA would give permission to fly TUTUR permanently.

Second Objective of trial:

Reduce separation times between departing aircraft. This was achieved, the trial did allow EDI to manage 1 minute separation between aircraft by alternating westerly departures on GOSAM 1C and TUTUR.

Third Objective of trial:

Reduced taxi time and runway holding point time and congestion – problem at peak times when aircraft are queuing and effects “on time performance” of aircraft. Achieved. The calculations made by EDI indicate that 944 minutes of taxi time saved during the trial and reduced CO₂ and NO_x emissions on runway. There are other methods to reduce fuel burn on the runway, eg by using only one engine for taxiing etc, reduced queuing is estimated to have saved 9 tonnes of fuel and saved 30 tonnes of CO₂.

Wider network contribution:

Increased airspace capacity across Scotland. A lot of planes currently fly over a holding point at Cumbria, and TUTUR meant planes going more over Northumberland instead which helped free up airspace for planes flying from Glasgow and GOSAM flights.

Other points:

Community reaction and noise impact is not part of the CAA trial process, but the airport measured it as well. The airport received 7934 complaints during the trial. 57% were not about TUTUR, but planes using other SID routes such as GOSAM and GRICE. 0.4% of complaints received were in favour of TUTUR.

709 complaints were received from Blackness, from 10 complainants. A shout of “rubbish” was heard from the floor. In response, MA asked the meeting to make comments through the chair. MW asked attendees if they had submitted any complaints during the trial. Over 20 hands went up, which is much more than the 10 complainants referred to in the Blackness Noise Report. (Post meeting note: it is not known how many of the attendees at tonight’s meeting, who indicated they had complained, were Blackness Area residents, however a number of local residents who had complained did not attend this evening’s meeting).

GR said this data had been collected from the noise line and the microsite, and did not comment when asked if it was possible that not every complaint had been registered. He was also asked if the complaints system was subject to independent scrutiny, apparently it is not.

Despite the trial being ended early due to political pressure from MSPs and the Scottish Transport Minister, the airport had still gathered data, including noise data, and had installed additional noise monitors. A noise monitor was installed in Blackness from 6th October to 12th November. The noise monitor measured all noise not just aircraft noise, and the raw data was matched with the flight data. The monitor was set to trigger a measurement at 58 decibels for 12 seconds. Overall average noise was 66dBA during the trial, with 61dBA post trial.

Q and A session:

There followed a series of questions from the floor, and a lively meeting ensued with many residents asking questions, and expressing concerns about how the flight trial process was managed, how complaints were handled, how the data in the reports has been presented, and above all that despite the trial having ended, problems with aircraft noise continue. The airport claims that “nothing has changed”.

The main points raised included:

1. While the trial was mainly for technical reasons, it was not a total success. The route was not flyable in all conditions by all aircraft.
2. EAL consider though the trial was cut short they had sufficient data and have therefore submitted the proposal to the CAA for approval.
3. GR acknowledged the trial was cut short due to a request from the Scottish Transport Minister.
4. Residents noted that cutting the trial short potentially reduced the level and quality of complaints that may have had to be considered in a decision about permanent approval
5. The CAA and the EAL will decide whether to proceed with the TUTUR route or not.
6. Many residents have a problem with the noise and complaints data, and simply do not accept EAL’s case for the conclusions drawn from the data or the numbers of complaints received.
7. There is an ongoing perceived major problem with noise still continuing to adversely affect the residents of Blackness and other areas, while the airport says nothing has changed.

8. People are very angry about how the airport is handling the matter, particularly the assertion that “nothing has changed”, although EAL accepted that they had made some changes to the way existing SID routes are used, with jets using GOSAM and non jets (turbo props) using TALLA. GRICE has also been changed so that aircraft remain on the route until they reach an altitude of 4000ft rather than 3000ft.
9. People wish to review the flight data to compare year on year to see evidence of what changes have taken place. GR offered to send BACC data for the current week and for the same week in 2014 and 2015 to assist this process.
10. GR offered BACC a meeting at the airport to discuss the historic flight data.
11. There is a possibility of an Independent Noise Board being set up to look at issues of aircraft noise. GR advised some community councillors could possibly participate in this. (Post meeting note: MA expressed interest in participating in this).
12. Also a possibility of installing a real time flight tracking system linked to a complaints logging system, similar to the CASPER system currently at Gatwick.
13. There is clearly an issue of trust in EAL, with many people feeling that the airport has a clear conflict of interest, by being both the provider of the information and the beneficiary (in the event of CAA approval of the TUTR flight path). So in this context the data submitted by EAL to the CAA is difficult to consider as being truly independent.

The item on the airport flight trial ended and GR and his colleagues were thanked for coming.

At that point, many members of the public left the meeting, around 15 people remained in the room including the Community Councillors.

MA advised those remaining, that given the late hour, with the exception of the planning item, he proposed that the rest of the agenda be held over until the April meeting. This was agreed.

Planning Update

P/15/0644/FUL 4 West Terrace: application for extension. This application had now been resubmitted. The applicants attended the meeting. Changes had been made to the application included parking provision, and overall height has been lowered.

Discussion about the application followed, some supportive, others negative. It was agreed that overall it came down to “a matter of taste” – and how a modern extension would appear at what is a relatively prominent site. The majority view of the meeting was in support and therefore the BACC would submit a comment on the Council’s web site accordingly. However, to address concerns raised about the possible subsequent subdivision of the extension from the existing building, to form a separate property, BACC would also request the incorporation of an appropriate mechanism to address this, in the event that the Council were minded to approve the application.

Date of next meeting

- Wednesday 20th April 2016 at 7pm in the Community Hall

MA thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting at around 9.30pm.