



# Belfast City Airport

Our Ref: BA/mc

6 July 2004

Mr Dave Carroll <sup>6/7/04</sup>  
Divisional Planning Officer  
Department of the Environment Northern Ireland  
16-22 Bedford Street  
BELFAST  
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MR CARROLL

06 JUL 2004

RECEIVED

Dear Mr Carroll

Following the release of the recent White Paper on the Future of Air Transport and the views expressed therein vis-à-vis growth at Belfast City Airport I respectfully submit a request for the formal review of the planning agreement governing its operations.

Our submission is attached and I believe the views and conclusions it contains are wholly consistent with both the spirit and detail of the White Paper in looking ahead to 2015 and the sort of growth one might expect of an airport our size.

We have sought to be consistent with the White Paper objectives while protecting the environment and maintaining the delicate balance between growth and community interests.

In making our submission we have consulted widely over the last five months with all considered stakeholders of Belfast City Airport in order to discern what we might reasonably request under any review process. Their views and submissions are reflected in the totality of the document.

There are two main pillars of our submission; one being a request for an increase in the airport's seats for sale allocation in order to reflect the context and reality of growth within our niche market, and the other being the conclusion that the growth interests of the airport are not best served by applying for a change in the operating hours. We will therefore not be seeking the inclusion of a late night flight as speculated in the Press.

We do intend to thoroughly and determinedly pursue a successful conclusion to the seats for sale issue which we believe to be a commercial consideration rather than a planning issue, even though it is part of the current Planning Agreement.

Cont'd/...



Belfast City Airport

I look forward to any initial thoughts and what further information you might need to process this request and to reach a successful and equitable conclusion in the review.

Yours sincerely

BRIAN AMBROSE  
Chief Executive

Enc

# REQUEST TO REVIEW THE FORM OF THE PLANNING AGREEMENT AT BELFAST CITY AIRPORT

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## 1. Introduction

The Aviation White Paper published in December 2003 takes a strategic view on the future development of airport capacity within the UK, looking forward over a thirty-year horizon. The Secretary of State for Transport states *“The challenge we face is to deal with the pressures caused by the increasing need to travel whilst at the same time meeting our commitment to protect the environment in which we live.”* The Secretary of State goes on to say *“The White Paper sets out a measured and balanced approach providing a strategic framework for the development of air travel over the next 30 years”*. In commenting specifically on Northern Ireland and Belfast City Airport the report’s main conclusions state ***“... the Northern Ireland authorities should review the form of the planning agreement at Belfast City should the airport operator ask them to do so: ..”***

The normal business planning cycle for this Company has traditionally been addressed by the internal publication of a 5-year plan. However, in line with the timescales adopted within the White Paper, Belfast City Airport is developing an Airport Master Plan to 2015. We have sought to be consistent with the White Paper objective of growth whilst protecting the environment and also adopting a measured and balanced approach. It has become apparent as a result of this exercise that some elements within the form of the current Planning Agreement should be reviewed.

In this document, the salient points of the current strategic view have been detailed and an indication given of the scope of environmental measures that would be introduced by the Airport.

Recognising the key role that Belfast City Airport plays as a strategic gateway to Northern Ireland, the resultant plans are consistent with the White Paper conclusions regarding the future growth of Belfast City Airport.

## 2. Statement of Policy

Future growth at Belfast City Airport will be achieved while adhering to our Policy of Sustainable Development:

*“Through its programme of sustainable development, Belfast City Airport is committed to achieving a balance between the social and economic benefits of the Airport’s growth and the environmental impact.*

*We will work with all airport ‘Stakeholders,’ including airlines and tenant companies using Belfast City Airport to minimise the environmental impact on the community.”*

### 3. **Future Airport Development**

#### (a) Market Profile

While it must be acknowledged that it is intrinsically difficult to forecast passenger growth in a 15 to 30 year context, it has been possible to make some assumptions regarding BCA's specific role and target market. The airport market in Northern Ireland has 3 broad sectors namely –

- Scheduled services
- Charter
- Cargo

BCA currently operates mostly within the scheduled services sector. Specialist charter services have been operated to a limited number of European destinations as occasion demands. The charter market accounts for less than 1% of total passenger throughput, and while this business may continue, scheduled services will remain as BCA's core business. Potential modest development of the cargo market may occur within the airport's permitted hours of operation.

BCA is not, and will not, be targeting the 24-hour cargo market or long haul charter markets and will not be making infrastructure investment to facilitate this business. In essence this means that BCA will restrict operations to the 'narrow body' category of jet aircraft and turbo prop aircraft. BCA will not be seeking infrastructure upgrades to accommodate wide-bodied aircraft nor will we be seeking relaxation in operating hours to accommodate the dedicated cargo market.

#### (b) Passenger Numbers

The BCA business model assumes 3% growth per annum in passenger numbers, which would bring total passenger throughput to 3 million passengers per annum by 2018. This supports the White Paper position that Belfast International will achieve the majority of future growth. The current 'seats-for-sale' limitation, which inhibits growth in passenger numbers beyond approximately 2.2 million passengers, was developed against a backdrop of the limited capacity of the old terminal building. It is the opinion of BCA that this is no longer a relevant factor following the construction of a new terminal building with much enhanced capacity. We therefore seek the removal of this limitation, leaving the current restriction of 45,000 ATM's as a more appropriate measure.

### (c) Air Traffic Movements

BCA is not seeking to increase the current limit of 45,000 Air Transport Movements over any 12-month period. In addition to the current requirement to accept only those aircraft types which meet 'Chapter 3' standards, BCA will seek to further prohibit 'marginally compliant aircraft'.

Regarding specific aircraft types BCA will only allow the operation of narrow body, single aisle aircraft.

### (d) Operating Hours

In conducting the strategic review of the needs of BCA over the next 10 - 15 years BCA has consulted widely to ensure that all stakeholders are fully aware of the development plans. Included within this process of informal consultation have been the following organisations –

#### Airlines

- bmi
- flybe
- British Airways

#### Residents Groups

- Hollywood Residents Association
- Cultra Residents Association
- Inverary Residents Group
- Helen's Bay Rate Payers Association
- Kinnegar Residents Group
- Park Road Residents Group

#### Business Organisations

- CBI
- IOD
- Consumer Council

#### Political Representatives

- UUP
- DUP
- SDLP
- Sinn Fein

#### Councils

- Belfast City Council

#### Shareholder

- Ferrovial Aeropuertos

The views of those consulted in relation to operating hours ranged from those who would like to see an extension to operating hours to those who would be strongly opposed to any adjustment of hours.

After a comprehensive review and in recognition of the strongly held views of residents and local politicians, BCA has decided against requesting an extension of operating hours. This, despite airline requests for extended operating hours and a measure of demand from the business community, is in the opinion of the airport a responsible approach to the strategic development of the business. It is recognised, consistent with the White Paper, that a balance needs to be struck between the needs of the travelling public and those living in close proximity to the airfield. The growth in passenger numbers previously referred to is not predicated upon an extension of operating hours.

#### (e) Land Use Development

Considering airport development over the next 15 years, a number of potential land use developments have been identified.

- (i) Property development - the development of approximately 30 acres of land on the site, which is currently under utilised would be consistent with the proposed Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan, and the outline of the forthcoming Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan. These documents recognise the strategic role of Belfast City Airport to Northern Ireland.
- (ii) Runway reconfiguration - With the potential growth in direct scheduled service to European destinations over the next decade the need to modify the runway at BCA may arise. For example the addition of starter strips could increase the range for current aircraft types operating from BCA.
- (iii) Public Transport - In order to optimise the use of public transport the potential of a new rail halt and / or a rapid transit route directly servicing the Airport terminal will be investigated in association with the relevant authorities.
- (iv) Access Road - Investigate the benefits of a road connection to the D5 development

BCA recognise that the pursuit of any of these developments will be through the normal development control process.

#### 4. **Environmental Issues**

It is projected that passenger throughput will increase by approximately 50% over the next decade.

Consistent with both the White Paper's requirement for a full environmental assessment of the impact of projected growth, and BCA's policy position in relation to sustainable development, the airport is developing plans to mitigate the environmental impact of the projected growth:-

##### (a) Noise

The current regime for noise management is based on the 1997 Planning Agreement and additional noise management procedures and targets voluntarily introduced by the Company. BCA were actively involved with the DRD initiative which led to the drawing up of "A Good Practice Guide to the Assessment and Management of Aircraft Noise Disturbance around Northern Ireland Airports".

- We will continue to work with the DRD and the BCA Forum to further develop and implement the Noise Management Action Plan which has evolved from the 'Good Practice Guide'.
- We will complete infrastructure development creating 3-off taxiways to the runway thus reducing the requirement for significant aircraft backtracking. Currently if an aircraft passes one of the 'exit-points' on the runway (A2 taxiway), it is necessary to continue to the end of the runway, turnaround and 'backtrack' to the A2 exit point. With the upgrading of A1 taxiway aircraft will exit without the need to backtrack thus reducing aircraft ground noise.
- We will work with airlines and tenant companies to minimise noise at source from aircraft and ground operations.
- We will use powers vested in BCA by the Aerodromes (Noise Restrictions) Regulations 2003, to further limit the noise categories of aircraft permitted to operate at BCA.
- The airport will further develop linkages with the Manchester Metropolitan University to derive benefit from their recognised expertise in Noise Management

##### (b) Air and Water Quality

- We will further improve the Monitoring regimes for air and water quality.
- We will undertake further studies of air and water quality and model the affects of growth to 3 million passengers per year.

(b) Air and Water Quality (cont'd)

- We will continue to benchmark our operating procedures with those of other UK airports to maintain industry good practice at BCA.
- Development of Operating Procedures will minimise airside emissions.

(c) Surface Access

- We will undertake a study to model the surface access impact of the airport growing to 3 million passengers per year.
- We will work with Translink and others to explore the possibility of rail and / or rapid transit halts.
- We will continue to encourage the increased use of public transport.
- We will investigate the potential benefits of a road connection to the D5 development.
- Within the timeframe considered it is recognised that the Sydenham Bypass widening scheme is scheduled for completion.

5. **Conclusion**

In conclusion, it is our contention that the plans detailed in this submission are consistent with both the BCA Policy in relation to Sustainable Development and the broad conclusions of the Government's Aviation White Paper.

BCA is recognised as an important transport gateway making a significant contribution to economic life in Northern Ireland. The direct economic impact of BCA is the employment on site of 800 airport related staff and the associated contribution to the local economy of £20m per annum. The additional indirect contribution the airport makes to the economic prosperity of Northern Ireland is widely recognised.

The benefits of a measured and balanced growth of this key asset have been carefully considered against the airport's environmental responsibilities, and we would contend that a sustainable strategy has been proposed.

We would therefore request that a review of the current 'seats for sale' restriction contained within the Planning Agreement be set in motion forthwith. So that these proposals can be considered expeditiously we would welcome an early meeting to ascertain what, if any, further information will be required. Clearly such an approach will reduce any nugatory work on either side.

Finally, with openness in mind, it is our intention to release this paper to all of those we have consulted.

6 July 2004