

Minutes from: SASIG Technical Working Group Meeting
Subject: Surface Access (Meeting No.1)

Date: Thursday: 14th April 2016

Time: 11.30 – 14:00 hrs

Venue: Room 2, Local Government House, Smith Square, London, SW1P 3HZ

Attendees:

Cllr Jamie Macrae (Cheshire East)
Cllr Nigel Shaw (Broadland)
Cllr David Sleight (Wokingham)
Kay Mead (East Herts)
Jeremy Pine (Uttlesford)
Zhanine Smith (Essex)
Val Beale (Hillingdon)
Colin Stanbury, (Richmond)
Masum Choudury, (Slough)
Chris Cain, Northpoint
Lesley Smith, Northpoint

Apologies Received:

John Coates (Richmond)

Introduction & Background:

This being the first meeting of the Surface Access Technical Working Group (TWG), Chris Cain gave an introduction as to why the Technical Working Group (Surface Access/Environment, Planning & Airspace/Cities and Economic Growth) programme had been set up. The aim is to identify where SASIG can and should influence the Government's aviation policy agendas in these areas.

The Surface Access meetings will enable SASIG to work to develop a position on whether Govt. policy has adequately cover airport surface access requirements. It was established in the 2003 Airports White Paper that road and railway connections to airports are 'part of the national infrastructure' and consequently needs to be accorded the attention and priority that status implies. This commitment got 'watered down' by the new Government in its 2013 Aviation Policy Framework, which focuses on placing the cost of improvements with the developer – in this case the airport. SASIG members have witnessed the fall out from this change in approach with projects being dropped or delayed, leading to congestion on road and rail networks for local and commuter traffic.

SASIG therefore needs to decide whether to pick this issue up, define its own policy agenda in this area and present Government with more appropriately drafted policy that addresses the issues its members are facing for adoption in the review of the Aviation Policy Framework (APF) and National Policy

Statement (NPS). Following a meeting between SASIG and the Aviation Minister, Robert Goodwill on 14th March 2016, SASIG were informed that the APF and NPS are being reviewed with draft of both likely by the end of this year and implementation likely to be summer 2017. At the same meeting with the Minister, it was notable how he only addressed the third runway related surface access issues until it was pointed out to him that undertaking improvement works at other airports was just as important. His response was to rely on the proposition of it being the operator's responsibility to bring forward proposals and the Government would then consider contributing but only where the benefits did not directly accrue to the airport operator. The concept of different approaches applying to on-site airport and off-site public infrastructure was not mentioned in the Minister's attempts to stick to the current developer pays convention.

Action: SASIG needs to provide input into the Government's policy-making process before the draft APF and NPS are completed and published.

Airports Where Improved Surface Access Links are Needed:

In discussion amongst the TWG it was noted that:

- Stansted still has issues of speed and capacity on its rail connections to London
- London City is still not linked to Crossrail and
- Nothing has happened to improve Southend Railway Station in the last five years.

Cllr Jamie Macrae noted also that at Manchester Airport, there remain severe capacity constraints even though 2 extra platforms have been built and the Manchester Metro into the airport is nearly complete. Moreover that the much vaunted HS2 spur into the city does not actually go to the airport.

Chris Cain also highlighted that not many regional airports, but especially those under 3-5 million passengers, had seen much in the way of investment in road and rail infrastructure. So Luton (M1 Link), Edinburgh (tram), Birmingham (A45 underpass under runway) and East Midlands (A453 upgrade) had all seen some modest improvements, but smaller airports had not (the honourable exceptions being RHDS with its FARRS corridor and DTVA with a new access road), even though it was these airports that were likely to benefit most from investment in terms of better access to their catchments. In the UK the focus is on relieving congestion rather than improving accessibility and unlike in Europe airports are generally required to pay for such investments, but because they can't afford them, do not make them.

The key wording of Sections 5.11 and 5.12 of the current APF (March 2013) state that "*All proposals for airport development must be accompanied by clear surface access proposals...*" and "*Where the scheme has a wider range of beneficiaries, the Govt. will consider....the need for additional public funding on a case-by-case basis.*" SASIG needs to consider challenging this frame of reference as in practice it is a recipe for Govt. to do as little as possible.

DfT's Approach to the Issue:

Chris Cain also mentioned to the meeting that the Minister's view that Govt. are not sure they can invest in certain airports because of State Aid rules, on the grounds that it would give competitive advantage to one airport over another, is simply not a valid one, as such infrastructure offsite counts as operational and is therefore not aid. Only if the infrastructure is on site, is expensive and therefore confers considerable commercial benefit to one airport over another, would such considerations arise.

Cllr Macrae raised the question of cost-sharing for new investment in infrastructure and how it is addressed. Val Beale voiced concerns regarding the danger that nothing could get done amidst the all the discussions of who pays for what. Zhanine Smith told the group that it was capacity issues at J8 on the motorway that causes problems at Stansted, not on site constraints that MAG might reasonably be expected to pay for. There had been no decisions from Highways England about the issue and they were still waiting for information from MAG to feed into a feasibility study on surface access that had been commissioned some time ago. Jeremy Pine added that although there had been some planning agreements with Essex and Hertfordshire several years ago, time had now moved on and MAG were now saying things had changed.

In response Chris Cain commented that the number of departmental staff dealing with surface access issues to airports had been increased, and consequently this was a good time to raise problem areas. David Sleight informed the group of how train services at Gatwick are increasing post station improvements and that Great Western Railway (GWR) were trying to achieve electrification of certain routes to allow better rail access to Heathrow from the west and south west.

Action: The group agreed the following:

- a. There needs to be a clear prioritisation of primary, secondary and tertiary schemes and the basis for such categorisation;**
- b. Simple but fair principles about that establish where the funding is coming from; and**
- c. Coherent policy that helps align investment to growth.**

SASIG should point out to Govt. that there is no clarity anywhere on these points. If the objectives and thresholds that establish the mechanism for how projects can be brought forward and triggered are not in place, then nothing gets done.

Developing SASIG's Position:

There was then a discussion on the subject of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy), which has replaced the Section 106 planning agreement as the source for most surface access contributions by developers. Basically authorities cannot secure funding directly in the same way as before – they now have to be CIL compliant and the links between the funding and the projects it was secured from are less direct. Chris Cain said that it would likely be difficult for smaller airports if they needed to improve access to increase passenger numbers, if they haven't got a major application hang generating CIL funding on, especially if there were pressures to use the money elsewhere.

Cllr Nigel Shaw mentioned that Norwich Airport had benefitted from the northern distributor road which was paid for out of public funds. He also wondered how devolution would affect the issues under discussion by the group.

The group was asked to note the section of the meeting papers entitled: *Ten Other Strategic Access Issues for TWG discussion.*

Chris Cain told the group that SASIG should consider drafting a new policy that addresses these points and make sure it gets sent to Govt. in good time. The following evidence need to be included to give the broader policy proposals weight:

- i. Examples of where current policies are not working
- ii. Examples of where they have worked and are working
- iii. Examples of where and how funding has been achieved

The issue of airport car parking was also discussed by the group and Chris Cain stated that it should as a matter of principle always be within airport operational boundaries or approved park and ride arrangements controlled by the airport. Original airport Master Plan guidance contained this requirement. This is because of the importance of the airport controlling revenue flows and the levers to change the balance between modes of access. Similarly, there should be clarity about who benefits from congestion charge schemes (e.g. as proposed at Heathrow) and drop-off changes at smaller airports and how the resulting revenues are hypothecated. The possibility of introducing a parking, access or drop-off levy as part of the DCO process was also mentioned.

Cllr David Sleight said that the airport, which retains the income from it, runs the parking levy scheme at Stansted. However, it does then spend the money according to the wishes of the Airport Transport Forum.

Cllr Macrae highlighted the fact that the easier car parking arrangements become, the more impact is made on constraint and capacity at airports. He suggested that maybe SASIG should look at lobbying regarding the issue of airport designation in this regard.

The group's attention was again drawn to the section within the meeting papers entitled: *Ten Other Strategic Access Issues for TWG Discussion.*

Main questions from that list to consider were whether airport surface access strategies are useful and are there any mechanism for tying into surface access strategies? Additionally the subject regarding through ticketing and whether it was a viable and useful tool needs to be looked at. Other questions needing answers were whether Local Transport Plans (LTPs) still exist and is anyone looking at or revisiting airport Master Plans?

Zhanine Smith noted it was important to look at passenger throughput of airports, their age and what is reasonable for local authorities to expect of airports. This would probably be of more relevance with regard to newer airports. Chris Cain informed the group that he did a study of this at DfT some years ago and would revisit and update that study for the groups' information. It might be worth adding onto a benchmarking research paper.

Action: Chris Cain to look at a Benchmarking Research Paper considering the issues under discussion.

The group discussed TEN-T which is a recent core European Union transport infrastructure policy that may provide funding.

Action: Chris Cain will circulate details of which airports are on this network and which are not (ostensibly bigger airports are, smaller ones are not, they are in the Comprehensive Network) with the minutes of this meeting.

[Post Meeting Note: See the attached URL Links:

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/site/en/abouttent.htm>

<http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/tentec/tentec-portal/map/mobile.html>]

Cllr Jamie Macrae told the group this was an opportunity to pull together what SASIG has learned and bring to the July SASIG meeting. This can then be fed to Govt. in time for their end of year deadline for publication of the revised APF and NPS.

Action: The Group should look, in particular, at the *Ten Key Strategic Access Issues* as included in the meeting papers and to feed back into the SASIG Secretariat email, any points they wish to raise. These could include (a) any examples of problems at your airports and also what has worked well and (b) examples of Best Practice guidance. Chris Cain would then look at drafting something in time for the July SASIG. However there was also a need not to be seen to be criticizing Govt. but to give them something positive too.

All feedback should reach the Secretariat by the end of June.

Conclusions

The Chairman thanked all at the group for attending.

Next meeting of the Surface Access Technical Working Group is scheduled for September – date TBA.

(Post meeting: this date is confirmed for Thursday: 8th September 2016-11:30 hrs at LGA.)