



Department  
for Transport

# Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees

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# Purpose of these guidelines

1. The Government expects all aerodromes<sup>1</sup> to communicate openly and effectively with their local communities and users of the airport about the impact of their operations. Airport Consultative Committees (ACCs) are a well established way in which airports can engage with key stakeholders in the local area and beyond.
2. These guidelines are intended to assist those involved in establishing, running and participating in airport consultative committees. While the Government recognises that each airport consultative committee should work in a way that best suits the local circumstances within which it operates, this document sets out some particular principles and standards that committees can use to ensure they operate in an effective and constructive way.
3. These guidelines are intended to be applicable to all aerodromes with a consultation process, not only those designated under Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982. We recognise the differences in circumstance between individual aerodromes and that arrangements and procedures for one committee may not be appropriate for another. However, we hope that the basic underlining principles (as described in section 2) will be applicable across all committees.
4. The guidance is also intended to be useful for not only aerodromes that have, or intend to, set up a consultative committee, but also those who sit on the committees and other parties with an interest in the consultative procedures of airports.

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<sup>1</sup> In these guidelines 'aerodrome' applies to any aerodrome, irrespective of the size of operation. The term 'airport' is used interchangeably in this document.

# 1. The Basics

## What are Airport Consultative Committees?

- 1.1 ACCs are structured forums that provide an opportunity for the exchange of information between aerodromes and interested parties. They make recommendations to the aerodrome management and other bodies when appropriate as well as being a place where there is an opportunity to reach common understanding between interested groups about the nature of the aerodrome operation in the hope that issues can be resolved amicably.
- 1.2 There are 51<sup>2</sup> aerodromes throughout England, Wales and Scotland that are designated under section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to provide "facilities for consultation". The Aerodromes Designation (Facilities for Consultation) Order 1996 as amended (SI 2002/2421) provides the list of airports that are designated.

## Legislative and Policy Context

### **Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (as amended)**

- 1 "This section applies to any aerodrome which is designated for the purposes of this section by an Order made by the Secretary of State.
- 2 "The person having the management of any aerodrome to which this section applies shall provide:-
  - a. for users of the aerodrome,
  - b. for any local authority (or, if the person having the management of the aerodrome is a local authority, for any other local authority in whose area the aerodrome or any part thereof is situated or whose area is in the neighbourhood of the aerodrome), and
  - c. for any other organisation representing the interests of persons concerned with the locality in which the aerodrome is situated, adequate facilities for consultation with respect to any matter concerning the management or administration of the aerodrome which affects their interests.
- 3 "The reference in subsection (2)(b) above to any local authority includes in relation to the area of Greater London a reference to the Mayor of London acting on behalf of the Greater London Authority."

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<sup>2</sup> The Government is aware that the list of airports in *The Aerodromes Designation (Facilities for Consultation) Order 1996 (SI 1996/1392)* as amended (SI 2002/2421) currently includes airports that are no longer in operation.

- 1.3** The Government considers that the best means of ensuring fair treatment of the different categories of statutory consultees is through a consultative committee formed for this purpose. This provides an opportunity for the aerodrome to consult relevant groups simultaneously as well as allowing those groups to engage with each other directly.
- 1.4** However, the Government would not expect the absence of statutory designation to be a barrier to effective consultation, as it should be a matter of good practice at airports.
- 1.5** The Aviation Policy Framework states that:
- "The Government expects all airports and aerodromes to communicate openly and effectively with their local communities about the impact of their operations."*<sup>3</sup>

## The Role of Committees

- 1.6** Committees are made up of representatives from the three "categories" mentioned above - users of the airport, local authorities in the vicinity of the airport and other organisations from the community surrounding the airport (for instance residents associations and local environmental groups).
- 1.7** They should promote greater understanding both to the local community about aerodrome operations and to the aerodrome operator about the impact of those aerodrome operations and any proposed operations. Topics discussed at meetings can vary widely, but often include environmental issues, airport development, updates on airport operations and surface access.
- 1.8** The nature of consultative committees and, indeed, of "adequate facilities for consultation" will depend upon the type and scale of the aerodrome and is likely to be site specific.
- 1.9** The Aviation Policy Framework states that the work of ACCs should recognise the wider role of the airport as an important local employer and influential driver in the local economy, as well as considering the local environmental impacts of an airport, including noise.<sup>4</sup>
- 1.10** While committees are not dispute resolution forums and they do not have any executive or decision-making power over the aerodrome, they can facilitate constructive discussion and help resolve differences while maintaining an overview of trends. They also do not prevent interested parties from raising concerns directly with the airport.
- 1.11** Although the committees do not have any executive power, they should be holding airports to account by monitoring the implementation of commitments made by the airport and challenging their performance when necessary. For example, the Government expects committees to

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<sup>3</sup> Aviation Policy Framework, 2013, pg 68

<sup>4</sup> Aviation Policy Framework, 2013, pg 68

monitor the implementation of airports' commitments made under statutory Noise Action Plans, where relevant.

- 1.12** While many committees operate to fulfil a legislative requirement, there are examples of committees being set up at airports that are not designated under section 35 which demonstrates the value committees can have in helping various interests reach a common understanding of the impact of airport operations.

## Principles for Airport Consultative Committees

We recognise that committees vary widely in size and scope as do the specific operating procedures and arrangements and what works for one aerodrome will not necessarily work at another. However committees do, at their heart, have a similar role and purpose and thus can operate to a common set of principles.

### Five Principles of Airport Consultative Committees

- Independent
- Representative
- Knowledgeable
- Transparent
- Constructive

*These principles are discussed further in section 2.*

## The purpose and benefits of consultation

Consultation has many benefits for the local community, the users of airports, local authorities and aerodrome operators. For example, it can:

- enable aerodrome operators, communities in the vicinity of the aerodrome, local authorities, local business representatives, aerodrome users and other interested parties to exchange information and ideas;
- enable aerodrome operators to identify and take account of and monitor trends, perceptions and potential challenges that may arise over time with specific groups of interests;
- allows the local community and users of the airport to influence the aerodrome operator's decision-making process in areas of mutual interest and increases the effectiveness of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and expertise;
- minimise unnecessary and costly conflict;

- allow the concerns of interested parties to be raised and taken into account by the aerodrome operators, with a genuine desire on all sides to resolve any issues that may emerge;
- allows the local community, users of the airport and other interested parties to better understand the aerodrome's operations;
- complement the legal framework within which the aerodrome operates;

However, consultation is not intended to:

- detract from or constrain the responsibility of the aerodrome owner and/or operator to manage the aerodrome;
- prevent interested parties from raising concerns directly with the aerodrome, or through other channels.

**Examples of how committees provide benefits to the airport, to local authorities and local communities**

## 2. Principles for Airport Consultative Committees

### Independent

- 2.1** While the onus is on airports to provide facilities for and (usually) fund airport consultative committees, it is important that they are and they are perceived as being independent from the airport in order to maintain the confidence of all interested parties. Committees should be free to say what they think on issues. Committees should, as far as possible, be transparent about how and why they are funded, and chairs should be appointed through an open and transparent process.

### Representative

- 2.2** Section 35 specifies the categories of bodies or organisations that should be consulted, however it is important that all those significantly affected by or involved in the operations of the aerodrome should, so far as reasonably possible, have access to a representative who can speak on their behalf. Committees could also consider the need for independent representatives who are not affiliated with any organisation.

### The size of a committee

- 2.3** While the exact size of the committee will depend upon local circumstances, the committee should be a manageable size. Where there are a number of organisations that have a similar interest in the operations of the airport, thought should be given to ways in which those interests can be appropriately represented without making the committee unwieldy.
- 2.4** Members will not usually speak in a personal capacity. Instead they should represent the views of their wider organisation, consulting with other members of the organisation before meetings and feeding back afterwards.

### Making sure the mix is appropriate

- 2.5** There must be sufficient representation from each of the three discrete groups identified at section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to ensure that the views of that group are adequately expressed. While there should be fair and equitable treatment of the different categories, it is more important to ensure that there is a representative balance of interests rather than to attempt equal numeric representation. Subject to ensuring adequate representation for each group, each committee has

discretion to decide on the scope and level of representation based on local circumstances and practice.

- 2.6** The groups represented will vary between aerodromes: the users at an airport with a mixture of commercial air transport and general aviation (GA) flights may encompass a wider spectrum of interested parties than either a major airport or a small GA aerodrome. The scale of interest from the local community and local authorities is also likely to be more significant at larger aerodromes as the positive and negative impacts are likely to cover a wider geographic area.

### **Community organisations**

- 2.7** It can sometimes be difficult to judge whether a community organisation is truly representative of the community they claim to represent. Community organisations represented on the committee should ideally have a written constitution and documented membership to help secure the legitimacy of representatives.

### **Local Authorities**

- 2.8** Local authority representatives should represent the full range of local authority interests including planning, economic and environmental interests. Consultative committees may also be well placed to consider how the airport features in local authority plans and policies, such as ensuring the economic value of airports is reflected in local authority Local Plans.

## **Knowledgeable**

- 2.9** While it is not expected that members themselves are experts on every subject the committee discusses, members should have a general understanding of the issues involved and should have a more in depth knowledge of the area they represent. All members should take an interest in the issues being discussed at meetings and be prepared to seek advice from others (such as officers from across the different organisational interests in the case of local authority representatives).

### **Specialist expertise**

- 2.10** It is often useful, especially at the larger airports' committees, if members are permitted to be accompanied by technical advisers (for example, elected council members may be supported by officers). Such advisers should not, however, intervene in committee proceedings unless invited to do so by the Chairman.
- 2.11** Depending on the size of the aerodrome and the subject matter for consideration, the committee could consider appointing an appropriate consultant having aviation and/or other relevant expertise to act as a specialist adviser to the committee as a whole.

## Examples of how committees use specialist expertise

### Transparent

- 2.12** Committees should be as open and transparent as possible about the issues they discuss and the conclusions they come to.
- 2.13** The wider local community and airport users should be made aware of the existence of the consultative committee and its role in relation to aerodrome operations as well as how to contact at least the secretary of the committee.
- 2.14** The existence and role of the committee, as well as members of the committee and the organisations they represent, should be easily accessible to the community online through a section on the airport's own website or on a dedicated website. The website should also include a schedule of the committee's meetings as well as minutes of the meetings themselves.
- 2.15** Committees may also wish to explore how new ways of communicating with interested parties (such as through social media) could provide opportunities to engage more effectively with the people they represent.
- 2.16** Committees are encouraged to open their meetings to the public, unless there is a legitimate reason it is inappropriate to do so, although the manner in which the public are admitted to attend meetings should be decided by the committee according to local circumstances.

### Balancing confidentiality and transparency

- 2.17** There may be times where the committee wishes to discuss matters that are confidential in nature. This can be handled in a variety of ways, from closing part of the meeting to the public to discussing confidential matters in a separate meeting (such as a steering group).

## Examples of ways in which committees are transparent

### Constructive

- 2.18** The wide variety of issues that consultative committees can get involved in, and the passion that some of those issues can invoke in people have the potential to turn committees into a "talking shop." As far as possible, the committee should take a constructive role in issues, taking the opportunity to influence matters where appropriate. As the committee

does not have executive powers, its role is more along the lines of a “critical friend”, to offer advice and encourage the airport to act on its advice by pointing out things that are working well, as well as being objectively (as far as possible) critical of areas where the airport could make improvements.

- 2.19** Airport operators should take the opportunity to engage with the committee at an early enough stage of future plans in order for the committee to take a constructive role in advising the airport and where the airport can take advantage of the specific knowledge and expertise committee members have. We expect airports to consult with committees and take their views into account.
- 2.20** Committees could consider setting up an annual work plan that identifies priorities to help ensure work and discussions remain focused.

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# 3. Effective Meetings

## Set Up

### Funding

**3.1** The funding of committees is one issue that has the potential to be seen as compromising the independence of committees, as for many committees the administrative costs are covered by the airport. While there is little evidence that this is the case in practice, and as it is the airports that are legally responsible for providing facilities for consultation, committees should be transparent about how and why they are funded and seek to demonstrate how independence is achieved despite the financial ties.

### Chairs

**3.2** One of the most important ways in which committees can ensure their independence is by appointing a chair through an open and transparent process, preferably in line with the principles of the public appointments process and with the involvement of the committee itself. The chair should ideally be one that is not closely identified with any sectional interest. Thought should also be given to a term limit for chairs (for example, two terms of a maximum of five years, as is common for public appointments).

**3.3** It is important that consultative committees have an effective chair that is able to gain the respect of the other committee members and should have the ability to draw together a wide range of views into a coherent conclusion.

### Secretariat

**3.4** The Secretary should not be closely identified with any sectional interest. A local authority (ideally, not a planning authority for the airport) may be suitably placed to carry out this function.

**3.5** A properly resourced secretariat shall be appointed to ensure the effective working of the committee. The necessary secretarial support will depend upon the size of the committee and the volume and nature of the business handled. The duties of the secretariat should include:

- prepare minutes of the committee and distribute them to all members;
- issue notices of meetings of the committee and to place on the agenda any matters that are proper for the committee to consider;
- circulate relevant documents;
- publicise the output of the committee and maintain the committees website (where airport is not responsible for this)

- assist the committee on policy and technical issues, where appropriate.

### **Airport management**

**3.6** It is essential that the airport management participate fully in the committee proceedings by offering items for the agenda, attending meetings and by providing relevant information on the operation of the airport and answering questions.

### **Frequency of meetings**

**3.7** The consultative committee should meet at least three times a year, unless the committee is satisfied that fewer meetings would suffice. This ensures committees can respond to issues in a timely manner and in a way that adds the most value. Members should be given as much notice as possible as to the time and place of meetings.

### **Venue**

**3.8** The venue of the meeting should be decided by the committee. Unless otherwise agreed by the committee, the management of the aerodrome should arrange adequate facilities for meetings (as they have the legal duty to provide the facilities), having regard to travel convenience of members from the whole catchment. Venues should be accessible by public transport where reasonably possible.

### **Terms of reference**

**3.9** The terms of reference of the committee should be sufficiently widely drawn to allow it to consider all matters arising from the operation of the aerodrome. The exact terms of reference will be at the discretion of the committee but would be expected to cover existing and proposed facilities and services at the airport, input into environmental monitoring of the aerodrome, surface access, responses to formal consultation papers issued by government and other regulatory authorities, and consideration of the economic, and the social and environmental impact of committee recommendations.

#### **Example terms of reference:**

- to consider aerodrome issues as they affect the communities represented or the amenities of the aerodrome;
- to make suggestions to the aerodrome where this might further the interests of the communities represented;
- to stimulate the interest of the local population in the development of the aerodrome;
- to monitor the environmental impact of all aspects of the operation of the aerodrome and to advise on operating procedures resulting from such monitoring with a view to minimising noise or other pollution from whatever source;
- to protect and enhance the interests of users of the aerodrome;
- to discuss with the aerodrome formal procedures for recording complaints

about aircraft noise and other adverse effects of the aerodrome.

- to consider the contribution of the aerodrome to the local, regional and national economy.

## Sub Groups

- 3.10** Some committees (particularly at the larger airports) may find it useful to form sub-groups to deal with specific issues or areas. The need for sub-groups will depend on the scale of activities and the local circumstances of the particular airport.

### Examples of sub-groups

## Preparation

### Agenda and Papers

- 3.11** If possible all members should make available to the committee (through the Secretary) at as early a date as possible details of any matter of concern to that member which he or she wishes to raise at a meeting of the committee. Provided that a matter is within the terms of reference, it is recommended that all committee members be able to propose agenda items for discussion. However, there may be times where a case can be made not to accept an item, for instance if it involves an issue that has been discussed fully at a previous meeting where there is no new information and further discussion would not be constructive.
- 3.12** Papers should be circulated well in advance to allow representatives to prepare fully and obtain technical advice if necessary. The secretariat will need to ensure that the circulation of papers does not breach copyright, privacy or data protection.

### Items for Discussion

- 3.13** The issues that committees discuss will vary from meeting to meeting and from aerodrome to aerodrome, some will be standing items on agendas while others will be in response to ad hoc issues that arise. There should be an appropriate balance of issues discussed at meetings.
- Updates from airport management on operations at the airport, including passenger numbers and new services, runway utilisation, complaints, noise and track keeping
  - Updates from local authorities on local plans and policies that may impact upon the airport
  - Community noise and local air quality monitoring

- Noise insulation schemes
- Surface access
- Airport development
- Airspace changes<sup>5</sup>
- Noise Action Plans<sup>6</sup>
- Responding to consultations
- Community initiatives
- Updates from any sub-groups

## Proceedings

### Participation

**3.14** Members should be given guidance on how the committee works as well as the standards of behaviour expected of consultative committee members. To ensure the effective operation of the committee it may be considered useful to have a commitment from all members to participate actively in the work and discussions of the committee. To help with this, we included a draft Code of Conduct below that can be used and adapted by committees to ensure members understand what is expected of them.

#### Code of Conduct

- **Respect:** Committee members should treat each other with respect and courtesy at all times.
- **Commitment:** Committee members should dedicate sufficient time to prepare for and attend meetings, including seeking advice and views from others in their organisation where appropriate.
- **Conflicts of Interest:** Members should identify and declare any conflicts of interest (actual, potential or perceived), particularly where members do not represent an organisation.
- **Participation:** Members should participate fully in meetings. They should listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind while contributing constructively to discussions. Actions assigned to members should be fulfilled in a timely manner and progress reported back on at the next meeting.
- **Openness and Accountability:** Members should be open and accountable to each other and the organisations and communities they represent about their work on the committee.

<sup>5</sup> Airport Consultative Committees are listed as one of those who should be consulted with on airspace changes where there is potential for significant detrimental impact in the 'Guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority on environmental objectives relating to the exercise of its air navigation functions'

<sup>6</sup> Where relevant.

- Confidentiality: Members should respect the status of any confidential issues they discuss.

## **Discussion**

- 3.15** During meetings it is important that members should be given adequate opportunity to represent the views of those whom they represent and that no organisation or one group should dominate proceedings. Chairs should ensure discussion is on topic while members should make their point in a concise and constructive manner.

## **Voting**

- 3.16** It is expected that matters would be resolved by consensus. In general, the Chairman should avoid taking votes on matters other than those relating to the membership of the committee and its sub-groups.

## **Minutes and Actions**

- 3.17** The minutes of the meeting should be concise, but representative of the issues and views discussed. Committee publications should reflect the range of views and advice and/or recommendations to the airport operator put forward by members and should not merely reflect the majority viewpoint on any issue. Actions should also be recorded and followed up on at subsequent meetings.

## 4. Sharing Best Practice and Knowledge

### Sharing best practice

- 4.1 The sharing of best practice and information between consultative committees is strongly encouraged. For committees at larger airports, the Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees (UKACCs) is an ideal way to do this.
- 4.2 For committees at smaller aerodromes, sharing best practice on an informal and ad hoc basis may be appropriate. To facilitate this, committees should ensure their contact details are available on their websites.
- 4.3 All committees are encouraged to welcome members of other committees who wish see examples of other committees in action by observing meetings. Committees should also consider working together on issues of common interest by sharing information or ways of handling specific issues.

#### **Examples of sharing knowledge and best practice between committees**

### Sharing knowledge

- 4.4 Committees should also work with other organisations on issues where they have specific expertise to offer. This could include working with Local Authorities to inform Local Plans; the CAA on consumer issues through its Consumer Panel; or with the Department for Transport on specific policy issues.