3 Investing For The Future

Members of the local community sometimes ask us what is likely to happen in the future at London Biggin Hill Airport. Who decides, and what controls are there to make sure that it doesn’t get too big?

**Government Policy**

The Government believes that civil aviation’s central challenge is to deliver economic, social and environmental goals while ensuring that the industry continues to operate efficiently and effectively.

Sustainable development means a proper balance between the needs of passengers, the economy, society, and the environment – it does not mean no growth.

Fortunately today’s aircraft are far quieter and more fuel efficient than in the past – up to 70% more fuel efficient than 40 years ago. Better use of technology, improved air traffic control and more integrated transport access will all help to protect the environment in the future.

The Government has issued a comprehensive study of the needs for air travel in the south-east of England. The South East Region Airport Study (SERAS), examines the demand forecast for air travel over the next 30 years and propose options that meet the demand and ensure that the long-term development of aviation in the UK is sustainable.

These options will be the subject of consultation with the public and organisations. The Government will then publish – possibly early in 2003 - an Aviation and Airports White Paper which will set out the Government’s policy for the next thirty years. London Biggin Hill Airport has the opportunity to play a role in meeting local/regional aviation demand and, therefore, contributing towards national capacity.

The Airport has a Community Charter which says: “the Airport will always seek to act as a good neighbour, maximising the social benefits and minimising the environmental effects of its activities and ensuring it continues to operate efficiently and effectively, and delivers the benefits of aviation to the whole community.”

**Likely Policy Changes**

In the context of the SERAS Study, London Biggin Hill Airport is seeking to have a sensible debate so that the Government, and our regional and local authorities can take the necessary long-term decisions, balancing the needs of the whole community, the regional economy and the local environment.

A key factor for consideration will be Bromley Council’s decision to ban individual fare paying passengers from buying a ticket to fly from London Biggin Hill Airport. This social restriction on individuals, residents and businesses in the area has economic consequences for them as well, since it hits the economy of the whole region including the emerging economies of Croydon to the west and the Thames Gateway region to the east.

However, it is the people and businesses of Bromley who are hit the hardest, they paid to acquire the Airport from the RAF in 1976, and they paid for the losses whilst it was owned by the Council. They now have the chance to benefit from the lease agreed with Regional Airports Limited which acquired the Airport in 1994. Under those terms the Council not only receives a leaseholders rent but also a share of the profits.

**What are the Policy Objectives of the Airport Company?**

The policy objectives for the Airport are:-

i. To ensure that the Airport operates to the highest levels of safety for both the community and aircraft operators.
To promote and deliver the wide range of aviation services needed by the whole community, not just the wealthy.

To maximise the social, economic and employment benefits that the Airport can deliver to its regional community;

To minimise the environmental impact of the aircraft and the Airport operation through a continuous process of proactive measures and monitoring.

NOTE – NO EXPANSION IN FLIGHTS

Please note that:

• We are not asking for any more flights.
• We are not seeking to extend the hours beyond those already approved.
• We are not seeking to bring in bigger aircraft.
• We just want to allow fare paying passengers to travel on aircraft that are already authorised to use the Airport.
• Local people will then have the Freedom to Fly – from their local Airport.

Future Trends at the Airport

Local consumer research carried out in 1999 and 1996 (see Information Sheet No. 2) highlights the preference of local people to be able to travel from London Biggin Hill Airport. Almost 50% of people interviewed said that they would use flights if they were made available. This conclusion is supported by a 2002 MORI Poll for the Freedom to Fly Coalition.

It is likely that there will be a steady shift of emphasis from private to commercial flying at the Airport as long as members of the public are permitted to fly on aircraft already approved to use London Biggin Hill Airport. These flights, for the public, would be to destinations in Europe and for travellers on business, visiting friends and relatives, or aiming to broaden their horizons and widen their education. The flights will not be holiday charter flights (‘bucket and spade’ as they are known), since these are better served at the big airports, with big facilities like Gatwick and Stansted, and require larger aircraft than are permitted to use London Biggin Hill Airport.

The Airport will continue to be an important facility for both corporate and private aviation with an increasing number of hangars and facilities needed for aircraft to be based and operationally supported. This will increase local employment opportunities. Flying training will also continue, thereby maintaining the overall mix of aviation activity for which the Airport is well known and important.

Community Benefits

The community will derive benefits from the increasing Airport activities through:

• An annual contribution to the cost of Council and Community services from a share of turnover and/or profits from the Airport.
• Financial contributions to local community projects and amenities through the Airport Community Chest.
• A choice of training and work experience programmes offered by companies at the Airport.
• Quick and convenient access by air to European cities and beyond.
• Employment opportunities from the largest diversified employment centre in the Borough.
• New business for the region as a catalyst for inward investment and employment.

European Cities Direct from Biggin Hill

BAe-146 “Whisperjet” (above) and Embraer-145 (below)
Quiet, modern, aircraft like these regional jets are on the list of aircraft approved to operate into London Biggin Hill Airport and would have very little environmental impact.
Controlling and Monitoring Growth

This very important issue arises at almost all airports and valuable precedents have already been set. Of course these are issues that greatly concern local people and must be resolved both through legal agreements and by the introduction of monitoring equipment and independent reports.

The Airport is ready to enter into all fair and reasonable agreements with its local authorities and to maintain a constructive and open dialogue to monitor change and compliance. In the meantime the Airport will continue to publish information in leaflets such as this.

Clearly surface access facilities must improve in line with Airport development, and links will be made to Croydon Tramlink. In addition, improved public transport shuttle links between the Airport and the nearby railway stations, car sharing and other initiatives will all be actively pursued in partnership with the local authorities and Transport for London.

More Information

More information is available from:-

i) Other information sheets issued by the Airport.
iii) Visiting the Airport on an arranged visit, call 01959 578500.
iv) Leaving your request on our comments line, call 01959 578580.
v) By visiting Airport open days.
vi) Through your representative on the Airport Consultative Committee.

Other Leaflets Issued by the Airport

Information Sheet No 1 – General Information
Information Sheet No 2 – Serving The Local Community
Information Sheet No 4 – The CAA Beacon at Biggin Hill

Questionnaire – Biggin Hill Airport: Your Invitation to Comment

A full set of leaflets can be obtained from the Airport as follows:-

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E-mail: enquiries@bigginhillairport.com

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