



Subject:	George Best Belfast City Airport – Noise Control Contour
Date:	23 September 2016
Reporting Officer:	Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	John Walsh, Town Solicitor

Is this report restricted?	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
1.1	This report follows a request for further information regarding a response made by Belfast City Council in respect of the removal of the seats for sale restriction at Belfast City Airport to the then DoE relating to recommendations made by the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) following a public inquiry.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to; <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note the report.
3.0	Main report
3.1	<u>Background</u> The PAC conducted a public inquiry at the request of the Department of the Environment in respect of the City Airport’s application for the removal of the seats for sale restriction. A number of reports were taken to the Council prior to the conduct of the inquiry and the Council endorsed an approach that balanced the potential for economic benefits and

	<p>growth at the City Airport with measures that would protect communities and the environment.</p>
3.2	<p>Members at the meeting of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee on the 19th December 2014 delegated the presentation of the Council's case to the public inquiry to the Town Solicitor within the context of this balanced approach.</p>
3.3	<p>The Council's position at the Public Inquiry was to support the removal of the 'seats for sale' limit and for this to be replaced by the introduction of a noise control contour supported by a series of noise management control measures including fines for late flights; a prohibition on night flights; a system for departure noise control limits with fines; the adoption of a continuous descent approach for all aircraft landing at airport; the potential for noise insulation schemes and the possibility of adopting a quota count system. Noise control contours limit noise exposure levels created by airport operations by defining the extent of an area within which aircraft can operate at certain noise levels. The use of a noise contour is generally accepted as a means of striking a balance between the interests of residents and the benefits that accrue from an airport. The smaller the contour the more restrictions need to be placed on aircraft flights etc. At London City Airport, which operates in similar conditions to Belfast, in terms of proximity to residential areas and communities, the contour is fixed at 9.1km² (with a quota count system). Essentially the additional control measures endorsed by the PAC are those that were promoted by the Council to protect communities.</p>
3.4	<p>The Council supported the opportunity for growth at the airport in the context of attracting foreign direct investment, connectivity between the city and European destinations, particularly those that would open up the potential for commercial and tourism opportunities. The Council's case for growth was supported by evidence from an aviation economic forecasting expert. Based on growth scenarios, taking account of destinations and the type of aircraft likely to be required to service those destinations, it was determined that the likely noise contour would be between 5.2km² and 6.1km². The actual level specified would be dependent on the degree and mix of the other controls specified.</p>

3.5	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>Following consideration of the report from the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC), the Department invited comments from participants in the inquiry in respect of the proposed imposition of a noise contour of 5.2km². This was by way of letter dated the 2 February 2016 (attached at Appendix 1), with a closing date for responses of the 7 March 2016.</p>
3.6	<p>The Council wrote to the Department on 7th March 2016 (attached at Appendix 2) expressing the view that the approach from the Planning Appeals Commission in relation to the contour was at the most conservative end of the range and predicated upon a fleet mix which was not reflective of realistic ambitions for growth and connectively with key European destinations, placed undue weight on diversion from other airports in Northern Ireland and failed to give any significant credence to potential claw back from Dublin. This was consistent with the case presented by the Council to the public inquiry.</p>
3.7	<p>The specific view of the Council's aviation expert was that the contour size proposed by the PAC (5.2km²) could be seen as "harsh" when tied to the introduction of a Quota Count system. The Quota Count system, which was first introduced as a condition in 1993 to deal with night restrictions for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted, classifies aircraft into seven bands based on their noise levels while taking off and landing. Noisy aircraft are assigned higher Quota Counts and provide a way of controlling the number of noisier aircrafts that can use an airport on a daily basis as a strict limit is applied.</p>
3.8	<p>At the June meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, Councillor R. Browne raised as an 'issue in advance' suggesting that the Council should now withdraw its submission of 7th March 2016 and replace it with a submission which expresses support for the PAC's recommendation of a noise control contour of 5.2km², together with the implementation of the other noise control measures recommended by the PAC's report. The Committee agreed a report on the matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee and that the Minister be advised accordingly. As agreed by the Committee the DFI was notified of the Council's intention to revisit this issue.</p>
3.9	<p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None</p>

3.10	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u> None
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
4.1	Appendix 1 - Letter from DoE dated 2 February 2016 Appendix 2 - Letter from Town Solicitor to DoE dated 7 March 2016