

# Independent Forum meeting notes: 13/01/2021

**Meeting:** Independent Forum – held virtually on Zoom

**Date:** 13/01/2021

## **Joining:**

Paul Beckford, Chair, HACAN  
Tony Booker, Director, Colne Valley Park Community Interest Company  
Rachel Cerfontyne, Chair, HCEB (Chair)  
Stephen Cooke, Head of Communities and Engagement, ICCAN  
Steve Curran, Leader, London Borough of Hounslow  
John Holland-Kaye, CEO, Heathrow Airport Ltd  
Nigel Mells, Resident (Southside)  
Perry Phillips, Regional Organiser, GMB  
Steve Sargeant, Director, Beck Theatre  
Val Shawcross, Chair, Heathrow Airport Transport Forum  
Howard Simmons, Commissioner, ICCAN  
Bradley Smith, Sales & Marketing Director, Grundon Waste Management Ltd  
Neil Spurrier, Representative HCNF  
James Swindlehurst, Leader, Slough Borough Council  
Christine Taylor, Resident (Northside)  
Martin Tett, Leader, Buckinghamshire Council (New Unitary)

## **In attendance:**

Paul Atkin, Non-Executive Director, HCEB  
Lord Blunkett, Chair of Heathrow Airport's Local Recovery Forum  
Kris Beuret, Non-Executive Director, HCEB  
Vic Chetty, Senior Stakeholder Engagement Manager, Heathrow Airport Ltd  
Becky Coffin, Director of Communities, Heathrow Airport Ltd  
Rebecca Cox, Executive Assistant to the Chair, HCEB (meeting notes)  
John Davies, Non-Executive Director, HCEB  
Colin Flack, Chair of UKACCs and Birmingham Airport ACC  
Mark Frost, HSPG  
Hannah George, Community Engagement Manager, Heathrow Airport Ltd  
Martyn Hurst, Technical Consultant, HCEB  
Mark Izatt, Non-Executive Director, HCEB  
Guido Liguori, Company Secretary, HCEB  
Sam Matthews, Head of Communications and Strategy, HCEB  
Andrew Macmillan, Chief Strategy Officer, Heathrow Airport Ltd  
Anna O'Rourke, Executive Director, HCEB

## 1. Welcome and Chair's Introduction

- Rachel Cerfontyne welcomed all those joining the call, outlining the format of the meeting and the etiquette to be followed.

## 2. Update from the CEO of Heathrow Airport

- John Holland-Kaye reasserted his commitment to working with stakeholders during recovery, recognising the responsibilities that the airport had given its significant role in the local community. Passenger numbers were down by approximately 90% and cargo down by 20%. This had impacted on revenue with losses of £1.5 billion in the first nine months of 2020, which had deepened since then. The focus remained:
  - *Keeping passengers and colleagues safe*: the airport continued to lobby for a robust testing regime as an alternative to quarantine, and a trial had been set up in partnership with the Department of Health offering regular testing to colleagues. Safety would continue to be critical to raising confidence and a new facility had opened on site which had the capacity to offer 25,000 tests a day, which were also available to the local community and businesses.
  - *Protecting jobs*: there had been no compulsory redundancies on the front line and the London living wage had been retained for airport colleagues. There had, however, been job losses across the airport, including within the supply chain. A scheme was being explored to help ensure that those affected would be prioritised for jobs as recovery progressed.
  - *Protecting the business*: measures had been taken to plan ahead to ensure that financial difficulties would not be faced in the absence of any help from the government. These included the loss of approximately 50% of managers, the regrettable suspension of the free travel zone, the closure of the main office and a reduction in the scale and scope of the HCEB, to be discussed further later in the meeting. It was recognised that the reinstatement of the NPS had extended the uncertainty in the local community and the airport aimed to give people clarity as soon as it was able.
- Key to all of the above was getting people travelling again, which was not currently feasible due to lockdown. The airport had been encouraging governments worldwide to move to pre-departure testing, which began in the UK last week. It was hoped that as cases of COVID-19 reduced, a standardised global testing regime could replace quarantine. Post-Brexit it would be essential to have strong global connections and the airport was hoping to attract international businesses to the Heathrow area. Other issues that would become increasingly significant as passenger numbers recovered would be air quality, noise and carbon. The airport had committed to being net zero by 2050 and continued to work with the government and other organisations worldwide to achieve this.

## 3. Q&A session with CEO of Heathrow Airport

In response to questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- The airport was completing on the purchase of houses that it had committed to buy through the hardship scheme. The communities team was continuing to support the local community, which had lost jobs and businesses and was experiencing further uncertainty about expansion, as much as it could with depleted resources. It was highlighted that only longstanding community groups were receiving assistance, meaning that those areas without were not receiving help. John Holland-Kaye was not aware of this and asked Becky Coffin to follow it up.  
**Action: Becky Coffin**  
Rachel Cerfontyne reported that she had raised the issue of the ongoing uncertainty about expansion during her meeting with the Minister for Aviation and would continue to press this point with the Department for Transport.
- With regard to testing regimes, the initial aim was to achieve consistency between the UK, the US and the EU, with the US having introduced a similar



system to that trialled at Heathrow Airport. HAL would continue to encourage the government to speed up its decision-making processes and work on plans for the next challenge of scaling up testing capacity as passenger numbers increased. The HCEB had also written to the government about this issue. The Passenger Services Group would play a key role in quality control of the passenger experience going forward, in terms of cost, clarity and quality of service.

- That the airport was not currently in a position to give any further clarification about its plans for the third runway or when the DCO process might be resumed. This issue was to remain on the agenda of the Forum and updates should be brought to future meetings when available. **Action: John Holland-Kaye**
- That employees who were still working on site felt that they were being harshly penalised with the suspension of the free travel zone and the increase in annual staff parking charges. It was confirmed that the aim was to have the free travel zone up and running again as soon possible, but this had been part of the savings made to protect jobs and was in line with the suspension of other transport services which were currently not economically viable. John Holland-Kaye had not been aware of the increase in parking charges and asked the communities team to look into this. **Action: Becky Coffin**
- The work to ensure that the London living wage was paid to those in the direct supply chain had also been suspended, with one company missing out by one day. This was done with regret and was again part of the measures taken to protect jobs. It too would be resumed as soon as possible. In the meantime, the airport would continue to lobby government for aviation specific support.

#### 4. Presentation from the Chair of Heathrow Airport's Local Recovery Forum

- A presentation was received from Lord Blunkett. The Local Recovery Forum was set up to look at how Heathrow Airport could plan its recovery sustainably, recognising that collaboration and partnership were the only ways to recover from the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. To date it had held round table discussions with stakeholders, which would be repeated with a wider focus later in 2021, Forum meetings and a one-day conference in December. It had considered the role of the airport, local businesses, local government, education providers and the Heathrow Academy, looking at developing innovative plans for training and skills that would facilitate building back quickly - including small steps that could be taken now and serve as a platform to build on when recovery began. The HCEB commissioned Oxford Economics report demonstrated the extent of job losses in the local area and a hub was being developed with the Department of Work and Pensions which would enable the use of government programmes to redeploy airport employees and to give opportunities to local businesses. HAL was keen to think creatively and do things differently in the context of the changed world and recognised that people needed to be skilled in order to be able to take the opportunities available. Possible shared apprenticeship schemes were being explored, together with ways to link the Heathrow Academy with other Further Education establishments and encourage the flexible use of funding. The recently published Recovery Plan (<https://mediacentre.heathrow.com/pressrelease/details/81/Corporate-operational-24/12624>) had been aimed at giving hope, increasing morale and motivation and maintaining local enterprise, and formed the basis of a discussion which would be built upon. In response to questions and comments the following points were clarified:

- Rachel Cerfontyne described how it was often the most disadvantaged and vulnerable that suffered the most and did not possess resilience. It would be vital to consider how such people could receive special help, as well as encouraging groups that were not usually heard to be active in putting forward ideas. Lord Blunkett confirmed that schemes such as work placements, early access apprenticeships, and support for people with learning difficulties or who had come through the care system had been progressing in small but significant ways,



- but the pandemic had devastated them. Lord Blunkett welcomed this challenge for the Recovery Forum to retain the equality and inclusion agenda in recovery.
- The issue of whether jobs would be returned to those who held them prior to the pandemic was raised, in particular whether older people who had carried out the same role would be replaced by young people entering the job market. The importance of holistic thinking in relation to linking such people to high growth industries that were likely to recover quickly was also highlighted. Lord Blunkett confirmed that the Recovery Forum had considered this and recognised that with rapid retraining people could take new opportunities in these areas and develop a new career trajectory. Similarly, it would be crucial to give updated skills to those who did wish to return to their previous roles. HAL had always prided itself on giving its own employees opportunities to progress and discussions would be held with John Holland-Kaye about continuing this and helping people back into work after furlough.
  - Rachel Cerfontyne thanked Lord Blunkett for his presentation, offering to work with the Recovery Forum going forward and recognising that these themes of partnership, alliances and working together to solve problems and come up with new ideas were close to the HCEB's heart.

## 5. Presentation on Heathrow's proposed new engagement structures

- A presentation was received from Becky Coffin, Director of Communities and Sustainability, circulated with these notes. A review proposing to simplify and streamline Heathrow's community engagement structures, which included the HCEB, was being launched today. As a result of the pandemic, the airport's Community Team had been reduced. It had been decided to use this opportunity to look at how to do things differently and to ensure focus on those issues that were key to local communities and businesses. The review would consider how HAL should engage with communities and why communities wished to engage with HAL. Responses would be used to inform how the engagement structures would be set up in the future. In particular, it would be vital for everyone to feel comfortable participating in committees and, with this in mind, a key focus would be developing and enforcing a new code of conduct in order to create a positive and safe space for all participants. The ways in which people could respond to the review were outlined. Once responses had been reviewed, a summary of the feedback received would be produced in the Spring, together with the next steps.

## 6. Update on the future of the HCEB

- The Chair outlined how as the result of suspension of the DCO activity the HCEB would be significantly reducing its activities and responsibilities and be reverting to an Airport Consultative Committee in line with the DfT guidelines - [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/618544/guidelines-airport-consultative-committees.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/618544/guidelines-airport-consultative-committees.pdf). She reported with great reluctance and sadness that, following several months of negotiations with HAL, the HCEB's budget had been significantly reduced and the majority of the team were at the risk of redundancy. She was pleased to announce that the HCEB would be able to continue as an independent company with operational independence, with a Chair, a Passenger Services Group Chair and a part time Executive Assistant. The community engagement role would be dormant, except that which was ACC related, unless the DCO process was reinstated. The core function of the ACC going forward would be the continued Forum and Passenger Service Group meetings, which would provide a platform for robust dialogue, debate and mediation, stakeholder consultation, and holding Heathrow airport to account. The aim would also be to work closely with HAL, ensuring that their new engagement structures fed into the Forum effectively, and to act as a 'critical friend' during recovery and beyond. In the short term the HCEB's focus would be on winding down internally and developing future plans in conjunction with stakeholders. The Chair stressed that this situation was not of the HCEB's own making, but the organisation was determined to hold on to its values going forward. She thanked the



Board and the team for showing great professionalism, working through difficult times to create a significant legacy, and stakeholders for their ongoing support.

- In response to questions and comments the following points were clarified:
  - That should expansion plans be resumed, the HCEB Forum would be a key place at which the airport would be required to demonstrate a genuine commitment to decarbonisation and access to green spaces. It was confirmed that targets in relation to these – and noise – would be reviewed. Tony Booker of CVRP would bring to HAL's attention the major issues of concern. **Action: Tony Booker**
  - As TENAG would no longer form part of the HCEB structure, it was vital that the HCEB should continue to have input on transport and surface access. The HCEB Chair and the Chair of the Heathrow Airport Transport Forum would meet to discuss this further. **Action: Rachel Cerfontyne/Val Shawcross**
  - That the review of HAL's community engagement structures and the HCEB represented an opportunity to address some of the duplication of groups that existed currently. The Chair confirmed that work would be undertaken to ensure that the HCEB did not simply revert to the former HACC and to reinvent the ACC building on the learnings of the past 3 years. This would include consideration of membership, function, how best to deliver the ACC role and how to effectively link with other groups and committees. Proposals would be shared with interested stakeholders as they were developed, rather than simply being formally consulted on at the end.
  - That the Forum would continue to be an arena at which stakeholders from all groups would be encouraged to engage and raise issues.
- Becky Coffin thanked the HCEB Chair and team for their role in the recent negotiations, during which they had been challenging, professional and constructive in helping to find a solution.

## 7. Chair's closing remarks

- The Chair thanked those present for their valuable contributions to today's discussions, during which some clear themes had emerged, and for helping the HCEB to successfully maintain momentum in difficult circumstances during the past year.

**Remaining meeting dates in 2021:** 10 March, 9 June, 8 September and 8 December, all at 2.00pm.

