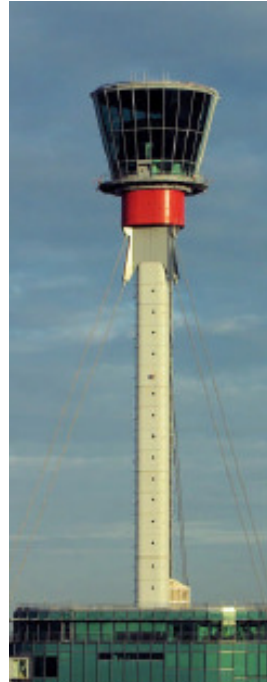# Sustainable Accessibility Concepts

Public Transport Accessibility to Regional Airports

Executive summary

GSA

Public Transport Accessibility to Small and Medium Sized Regional Airports

September 2011

Kent County Council

Executive Summary

Study Aims and Objectives

Kent County Council has commissioned this study into the public transport accessibility of small to medium sized regional airports in the North Sea Region of Europe. The study is part of the wider Green Sustainable Airports (GSA) Project, which is in turn part of the Interreg IVB North Sea Region (NSR) Programme within the European Union. GSA aims to develop strategies and solutions for a more eco-efficient, sustainable and green regional aviation.

Small and medium sized regional airports are considered essential for regional accessibility and competitiveness and it is therefore important that surface access enables the airports to function efficiently as part of the wider transport system. Airports have a concentration of activity that has the potential to achieve significant modal shift in favour of public transport. Increased activity at the airports will increase the demand for surface access.

The two key objectives of this study were as follows:

1. To identify the deficiencies in public transport surface connectivity at the small to medium sized airports in the North Sea Region of Europe; and
2. To produce recommendations for solutions to the deficiencies in public transport surface connectivity at the small to medium sized regional airports in the North Sea Region of Europe.

The study focuses on Kent's two airports: Manston (Kent's International Airport) and Lydd (London Ashford) Airport. The study also makes reference to a further six airports, which provide a North Sea Region context:

1. London Southend Airport;
2. City Airport Bremen, Germany;
3. Sandefjord Lufthavn Torp Airport, Norway;
4. Groningen Airport Eelde, The Netherlands;
5. Billund Airport, Denmark; and
6. Kortrijk-Welvegem International Airport, Belgium.

Best practice case studies into other regional airports with successful public transport access strategies were also developed, for Newcastle Airport, Rotterdam The Hague Airport and Bournemouth Airport. These case studies enabled more effective identification of the surface access requirements at the other airports being studied.

Study Methodology

The study was undertaken over a course of seven weeks from 15th August 2011 to 26th September 2011. The study was broken down into several stages, as follows:

Stage 1: Review of Existing Airport Policy and Accessibility – a desktop review of existing airport policy documents and an analysis of the existing surface transport access for each of the eight airports. Policy documents and online sources were used to develop a summary of the major surface access modes and routes for each of the eight airports.

Stage 2: Telephone Interviews with Airport Stakeholders – a series of telephone interviews were carried out with airport operators and relevant local authorities in order to confirm the information obtained as part of Stage 1. These interviews also helped identify the transport schemes and measures that are required and/or planned to address existing and future gaps in surface access.

Stage 3: Best Practice Case Study Analysis – best practice case studies were developed for three airports that are considered to have successful surface access strategies in place. These are Newcastle Airport, Rotterdam The Hague Airport and Bournemouth. This exercise facilitated the development of recommendations for the surface access improvements required at Lydd, Manston and the other European airports.

Stage 4: Gap Analysis and Identification of Future Surface Access Requirements – a gap analysis was undertaken for each airport to identify existing gaps in surface transport provision and to identify where improvements are needed in the future. Specific recommendations on the appropriate transport schemes required at each airport were developed. Further generic recommendations were also made that help form a 'blue print' for how accessibility could be taken forward for smaller and medium sized airports in the region.

Existing Airport Accessibility and Policy

A comprehensive review of each of the eight airports was undertaken in terms of their existing and forecast passenger throughput, plans for growth, existing surface transport accessibility and the airports' local and regional policies that impact on future surface transport provision.

Each of the airports is at a different stage of development and thus the surface transport provision varies substantially between them. It is often understandably the case that growth in passenger numbers is

aligned with improvements made to surface access, particularly in terms of new infrastructure provision. The opening of the new rail station at Southend Airport, for example, has been timed to coincide with the extension of the runway and the development of a new terminal building that can cater to an increased number of passengers. Airports cannot grow sustainably if passenger transport needs can only be met through the private car or taxi. Those airports which have a smaller passenger throughput and which do not have significant plans for expansion tend to have a lower public transport provision.

One of the key deficiencies identified was the lack of a rail service that can easily be accessed from the airport. Rail can offer staff and passengers a fast and convenient means of travelling to an airport, but many of the airports studied do not have their own rail station. There may be a rail station nearby, but this can only be used if there are shuttle bus or public bus services in place that directly serve the route between the airport and the station and which operate at times that are convenient for staff and passengers. For smaller airports the solution is not necessarily having their own rail station (due to the cost) but having good access to the most appropriate one.

Another key deficiency identified at some airports is a lack of local bus services that serve the airport and nearby towns. Some airports do not have a bus stop within their boundary, making bus an unattractive option for passengers who are carrying luggage. Bus services can also be infrequent and not matched to flight timings. Staff may also find it difficult to travel by bus due to the lack of early morning or late evening services.

Airports will find it difficult to improve their surface transport provision if there is insufficient passenger demand to justify new infrastructure provision (e.g. an airport rail link). Bus services that are operated on a commercial basis are also unlikely to be expanded unless there is sufficient commercial justification for doing so. Softer measures that focus less on infrastructure provision and more on marketing and promotion can help in these instances. Those airports which have a travel plan in place and which implement softer measures such as encouraging car sharing amongst staff can still achieve mode shift without significant levels of funding and other resources. Some airports are also well placed to promote cycling and walking amongst staff, both of which are highly sustainable modes of travel and which require little capital funding for promotion.

Future Surface Access Requirements

A gap analysis was undertaken for each airport, setting out each of the deficiencies identified for each mode of surface transport. The analysis then identifies the transport schemes and measures that would be

appropriate to develop, based on plans for airport expansion and growth in passenger numbers, the
funding available and which modes are most appropriate to promote.

A number of key themes can be drawn out:

- Bus services are often inaccessible and unattractive to passengers due to the distance between the
  closest bus stop and the airport, or are inaccessible to both staff and passengers due to their low
  frequencies and lack of early morning/late evening services. However, it can be difficult to justify the
  expansion of bus services where the proposed service cannot be shown to be commercially viable.
- Rail represents a fast and convenient form of transport to both staff and passengers. However, in many
  cases, the links between the airport and the rail station would benefit from improvement. The
  development of a shuttle bus service which links into the flight times could prove to be a more efficient
  method of providing public transport access to regional airports. This represents a more cost effective
  option where there is insufficient demand to justify providing a direct rail link to the airport;
- Walking and cycling can be promoted amongst staff, where there are sufficient numbers of staff who
  live within an acceptable walking/cycling distance of the airport and where safe routes and appropriate
  facilities exist (e.g. showers and changing rooms);
- The implementation of a travel plan, which focuses on softer measures, can be an effective means of
  achieving mode shift towards more sustainable modes. Staff may be incentivised to use a local bus
  service if they are provided with discounted tickets, or the development of a car sharing scheme can
  encourage staff to share their journey to work;
- Often, one of the key barriers to the use of sustainable modes of travel is a lack of awareness of the
  options available. This is especially the case for passengers who may not have travelled to that
  particular airport before and who therefore have little local knowledge. The provision of travel
  information at the airport and on the airport's website can help to encourage the use of sustainable
  modes. In addition, travel information (both within the airport itself and on the airport's website) should
  be provided in a range of languages to help overseas passengers; and
- Measures can be adopted that discourage the use of cars for journeys to the airport. These can take
  the form of car parking charges or charges for drop-offs.

Regional Airport Best Practice

Three examples of accessibility best practice for regional airports were reviewed. This enabled
recommendations to be made that can feed into the development of a blueprint for the regional airports in
this study. The case studies which have been examined in detail are:

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Rotterdam The Hague Airport: This case study highlights how the provision of frequent, high speed bus services (including airport shuttle buses) can significantly improve access to regional airports. The development and implementation of an airport shuttle bus service is less costly than the development of (either light or heavy) rail infrastructure.

Newcastle Airport: Whilst for some regional airports the development of rail infrastructure is not economically feasible due to low staff and passenger numbers, this case study highlights how the extension of the existing metro system in Newcastle has significantly improved public transport access to the airport and how the airport has subsequently undergone significant growth.

Bournemouth Airport: For smaller airports which handle approximately 1mppa, there is often insufficient demand (or funding) for the development of large scale infrastructure schemes such as the provision of a rail link or the development of additional bus services. Therefore the development of a travel plan, as is the case at Bournemouth airport, can offer real benefits in achieving mode shift in terms of promoting softer measures that focus less on infrastructure provision and more on marketing, awareness raising and promotion.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Gaps in public transport provision and specific initiatives that could address these gaps have been identified for each airport. It is recommended that as each airport increases its passenger throughput, public transport improvements are implemented simultaneously. This will facilitate early uptake of public transport by both passengers and staff. If public transport infrastructure is implemented at a later date, it is likely to be more difficult to change established patterns of travel behaviour.

A travel plan is a package of measures produced by employers to encourage staff and passengers to use alternatives to single-occupancy car-use. Our suggestion is that small and medium airports should pro-actively adopt travel planning as a mechanism to continually implement and manage a whole range of initiatives that can improve surface access opportunities. It is important to stress that the travel plan is not a solution in itself, but is a means to end. It provides focus and resources for enhancing surface transport over the short, medium and longer term.

Some measures which could be implemented by regional airports have been set out in this report. Some of these are quite straight forward, others are a little more innovative and would benefit from further investigation.

The measures are separated into short term measures (which are quick wins and can be implemented without significant funding) to longer tem measures which would require considerable costs and policy

support. In the first instance the short term measures should be focused upon, whilst the medium and
longer term measures should start to be moved forward.

Many of the initiatives would need to be trialled in order to identify how they could work. Following on from
such trials, 'toolkits' could be developed to roll these initiatives out to other airports. This could be a key
role and benefit of such an airport travel plan forum.

We also set out some other key areas to focus on:
- Marketing,
- Bus services, and
- Rail links.