



SPAA response to Consultation on issues affecting passengers' access to UK airports: A Review of Surface access

Established in 1921, the Scottish Passenger Agents Association (SPAA) is the world's oldest travel trade association. Today, the SPAA, is Scotland's largest travel trade association represents the interests of Scotland's major independent and Corporate Business Travel Management Companies as well as both Independent and Multiple Leisure Travel Agents.

The SPAA works alongside its Associate Members, which are made up of many of the world's leading airlines, tour operators and cruise lines together with Edinburgh, Glasgow & Aberdeen Airports. Each of these sectors within the industry has an interest in aviation/airports and all travel related issues which are relevant to their customers who in turn become customers of the airlines, tour operators, airports and ground arrangers within the UK.

Our Association represents Scotland's major travel agents within our Membership, working increasingly pro-actively with a growing group of Associate Members who are our industry Principals, to address the issues and meet the challenges of the constantly changing travel marketplace, thereby protecting the interests of our members and mutual clients throughout the nation and beyond. We are regularly involved in submissions to Government regarding major travel issues such as APD, reforming the ATOL scheme & review of the package travel regulations and work with Scottish transportation suppliers including rail operators, airlines & airports.

Introduction

SPAA believes that effective, efficient, high quality and resilient surface transport to airports benefits not just air passengers and airport staff but also the local population and is an integral part of the sustainable growth of any airport.

A passenger travelling through any airport should experience an easy passage to that airport with a fully informed choice of optional forms of transport as this in turn, combined with the cost of their flight from that airport, can be instrumental in the choice of a passenger's departure airport.

A modern integrated transport system plays a decisive role in attracting international investment and new routes whilst offering greater accessibility for Passengers of Reduced Mobility (PRMs) and easing surface transport disruptions for the local population near transport hubs.

SPAA is keen to support the work that is continually taking place by UK airports, and particularly at Scottish Airports to increase the number of passengers and staff accessing the airport by public transport.

Passengers accessing Scottish Airports can often have a more limited choice of mode of transport due to their limited ability to be able to connect with public transport from outlying

country areas. This results in the higher priority for additional road & car parking facilities to be available at competitive and fair pricing.

SPAA agrees with the recommendations put forward by the House of Commons Transport Committee in their recent report on Surface access to Airports :

- The Department for Transport should ensure airport operators to update any plans and surface access strategies that have not been updated in the last five years by the end of this year.
- The Government should prioritise integrated transport planning around airports. Further, that the CAA should strike a careful balance between fairness to motorists and deterring any increase in the number of private vehicle journeys to airports.
- The DfT should work with airport operators, airlines and others to devise a workable and affordable system for offering integrated ticketing across all public surface transport modes and airlines. This would also include signposting to, and information about, public surface transport options to and from UK airports.

The SPAA submission has concentrated on the access to Scottish Airports based on the fact that many of our passengers are in transit at one of the London hubs. It should be noted that the same basic principle would apply regarding access.

The volume of new direct flights into our Scottish Airports has meant that there has been a rapid extension of facilities required which, in turn, has meant a number of upheavals for passengers with their access to airports such as Edinburgh. These changes have been a challenge for everyone as total access has been reorganised and the flow of information has at times been stretched.

Executive Summary

- Scottish airports often have a more challenging issue to enable their passengers to access the airport they are departing from or arriving into by public transport for geographical reasons outside the central belt
- Public transport is often lacking and passengers are even more reliant on private transport which means that drop-off charges and car parking charges can be expensive.
- SPAA understands that rail links are not included in this review due to the role played by the Government in relation to subsidies but we would urge the CAA to consider the part that some airports are already involved in with projects at Edinburgh and hopefully Glasgow Airport and that the CAA should be fully aware of and support these projects.
- SPAA would also apply the same principle to projects improving road access to Airports such as Aberdeen to allow full consumer choice of mode of access.
- Any drop-off fees should be kept to minimum allowing passengers to arrive within easy walking distance of the terminal.
- A review of the time vehicles spend in the drop-off area would be useful combined with clarity on charges if minimum drop off times are exceeded.
- Airport websites should clearly show all the options available to access the airport with transparent charges.
- SPAA is of the opinion that as airports expand with additional capacity required and terminal extensions being built, that passenger access and the flow from off airport to on airport for passengers (whether outbound or inbound) is critical to allow ease of passage and up to date information via websites/social media is essential.
- SPAA does not feel that further research is necessary by the CAA on surface access.

Consultation Questions

1. Have we identified the key issues on market structure within the scope of this review?

SPAA believes that the review has covered all the key issues within the scope of this review and addresses a wide range of issues affecting the passenger experience in accessing UK airports.

SPAA believes that road and rail projects have a major part to play in passengers getting to the airport for many of our members and their passengers in Scotland and that these should be identified and considered in relation to the rest of the review.

SPAA agrees with the CAA's view that there should be competition between airport operators and different surface access operators to keep prices at competitive levels and quality of service high but this should not lead to the exclusion of new entrants.

Public transport to an airport is not always possible leaving many passengers the need to either be dropped off at the airport or park their car. The public transport options are also not always available on a 24 hour basis at some airports, leaving passengers, arriving late in the evening or departing early in the morning, and airport staff, working early or late shifts, no alternative but to use private transport.

There has been significant extension in the service provision of bus services to both Edinburgh & Glasgow Airport which now offer a 24 hour timetable from the centre of town together with an extension of the timings for the tram in Edinburgh and a co-ordinated bus/rail connectivity in Aberdeen.

These co-ordinated services are all clearly visible on the airports website for passengers and incoming visitors to view easily. Airports in the Highlands and Islands are more regularly accessed by car/taxi due to their location.

Public transport is not always suitable for passengers travelling with a lot of luggage, with families which may include buggies and for Persons of Reduced Mobility (PRMs) who might be travelling in a wheelchair. Car parking charges can be really high, particularly in proximity to the terminal which disadvantages passengers of reduced mobility and families

A careful balance needs to be struck between the charging structures for car parking at airports to ensure that prices are set at a level that does not result in passengers who do not have access to suitable public transport excessive charges. Adequate transport links to and from the terminal should be supplied with good frequency and allowing sheltered pick up areas

Many airports have seen passengers arriving by private car as a revenue opportunity, and several are charging quite large amounts simply for drop-off or collection with charges frequently applied to taxis as well as to private vehicles.

SPAA believes it's essential that any drop-off facility costs should be kept to a minimum for passengers arriving by private car/taxi. This must be within walking distance of the terminal so

that they can get quickly into the airport and start their journey. It's not acceptable that the free drop-off is only in a car park away from the terminal and then the passenger must take a bus to the terminal.

SPAA also believes that if any charges are levied that the cost that the time limit must be clearly visible and the additional costs for exceeding the time limit be clearly displayed and not be excessive.

Scottish Airports caters for a very large amount of inbound visitors from all over the world, particularly in the summer months, partly for overseas and domestic holidaymakers but also for events such as the Edinburgh Festival/Edinburgh Tattoo etc. The arrival process is often their introduction to Scotland and it must be welcoming and informative.

Pick-up areas vary with some airports offering up to 15 minutes free parking in short-stay car parks immediately adjacent to the terminal with marked and reserved areas. This offers an undercover dry area to transfer passengers and luggage and much less stress for drivers than arriving too early and driving round the airport for 10 minutes to avoid being given a ticket. Although drivers might think their pick-up will just take a few minutes, it frequently entails a longer wait. It's quite likely that many drivers would exceed the 15 minutes and be charged anyway. The airport is unlikely to lose out in parking fees and stands to gain from good PR and a less congested forecourt.

SPAA is happy that the CAA reviews the enforcement of the time vehicles spend in the drop-off area but remain realistic and transparent.

Airport operators generally work with selected taxi operators. SPAA believes that the licensing of official taxi providers should be reviewed regularly and that the process should be totally transparent and fair.

Passengers can pre-arrange cheaper journeys with mini-cab companies with pick-up normally in the car park or designated pick up areas. These arrangements are well understood by regular passengers.

Most airports will have contractual arrangements with transport providers which is acceptable providing that there is competition and transparency. Many airports hold an open tender and then award a contract to operate coaches into the airport such as Scottish Citylink, Lothian Buses/Airport Express etc. Some of these non express bus links can be fairly tortuous such as the service that operates from Glasgow Gilmour Street which is promoted as an airport link but is a local service that goes all round the houses before reaching the airport.

2. Have you any views and/or evidence on the market position of airport operators in the provision of airport services used to access the airport?

SPAA has no particular views or evidence relating to this

3. Have you any evidence or views on how well informed consumers are of their airport surface access options and on what is important to passengers in accessing an airport? Is this an area that merits further research?

SPAA feels that most passengers consider that ease of transport connections to the airport are important or essential. Inaccessibility for an early morning departure can often incur additional cost at an airport hotel to enable a passenger to reach their airport on time.

UK originating passengers are usually better informed than visitors who are reliant on websites, whilst overseas visitors may have to rely on, on board airline magazines or arrival videos.

It is essential that airport websites are transparent and promote options equally. The passenger needs to be offered a choice. Whilst there will always be passengers who want the fastest, more direct service to the city centre and are prepared to pay for it, there will be others who are cost conscious and would be prepared to travel a slightly longer albeit direct journey.

For example, Edinburgh Airport has information desks and leaflets on arrival in the terminal offering information about accessing central Edinburgh and beyond.

Have we identified the key issues related to the distribution of airport car parking? Do you have any views on what, if anything, would improve outcomes to consumers?

SPAA agrees that the CAA has identified the key issues related to airport car parking. It is important that a range of options are offered. A careful balance needs to be struck on car parking charges so as to encourage passengers to use public transport but, at the same time, encouraging drivers to use car parks.

Regular users of airport car parks will likely be aware of the different options available, if not via the airport's own website, through price comparison websites or their travel agent.

4. Have you any views and/or evidence on how the information set that passengers have, when choosing between airport surface access products, could be improved for consumers?

SPAA believes that airports should offer comprehensive information clearly stating any charges that passengers will experience for differing modes of transport/charges for car parking or drop off.

There should be clear and simple signage and maps for connecting transport/car parking pick up etc

A good example is Edinburgh which produces a route map covering Lothian Buses (including the Airlink bus) and Edinburgh Trams is available to all arriving passengers in the baggage hall.

It's also important to look at good practices of airlines. One example is the Directory page of British Airways' Highlife magazine clearly showing the different choices available for passengers to travel from the London airports they serve to central London with indicative prices. There

are also short videos played by some long haul airlines as passengers are coming in to land which is exceedingly helpful for Inbound tourists which could be encouraged.

5. Have you any views on our proposed way forward and, in particular, the development of good practice principles by airport operators?

Airport Operators need to make sure that passengers have access to a full range of options for assessing what is the most convenient and financially acceptable way for them to travel to the airport. The need of distributing information in relation to their access to or from an airport should be easily available via the airport's website and any disruption also via social media such as Twitter and Facebook.

SPAA look forward to seeing the results from this consultation when they are published and feel that guidelines could be set for Airport Operators to follow.

Thank you for taking our comments into consideration. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss any points raised in our response further with the CAA.

Further information

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