

# TAG Farnborough Airport

with Brandon O'Reilly, CEO

This was a welcome return visit by Brandon, who previously spoke to TFS to present the case for increasing the number of movements from 29,000 to 50,000 in 2009, a very contentious issue at the time.

He began by giving a brief history of aviation in Farnborough with some delightful archive photographs. From its earliest days, with such colourful characters as Colonel James Templer, a pioneer of military balloon flight, and Samuel Franklin Cody, Farnborough was a research and development airport, and the remains of an old rocket track can still be found near the Air Accident Investigation Branch facility, as well as all the listed building in the Heritage Area.

In the late 1980s, the Government decided to sell off the Royal Aircraft Establishment, as it then was. Changing from a military airport to a commercial one began in the 1990s, with the Ministry of Defence finally selling the site to TAG in 2003. It remains the only dedicated business airport in the UK and is the premier business airport in Europe. It is also the London centre for lower air space radar control.

One important condition of the transaction was that the airport would host the Farnborough International Air Show every two years, with Paris hosting alternate years.

The buildings, including the terminal, the hangars and the control tower, were all designed by Reid Architecture and have won multiple awards. The Aviator Hotel, operated by a different company, was designed and built to provide first-class accommodation for flight crews and passengers.

Brandon went on to give us some general data. Farnborough Airport enjoys a 35% market share of business aviation in the UK, the highest in the south-east by some way. There are 24-25,000 movements per annum currently, with permission to increase to 50,000 by 2019, phased in gradually. Weekend movements are also set to increase, to 8,900 by 2019. Larger aircraft are now using Farnborough, coming from greater distances.

TAG aims to engage with the community as much as possible. Working within the TAG Farnborough Master Plan, which was formulated in 2009, TAG engages regularly with the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee, a statutory body. Education is advanced through visits to local schools and colleges, engineering apprenticeships, and through a flying scholarship that pays for one young person each year to pursue a private pilot's license. Other important community engagement is through involvement with Community Matters Partnership and via TAG's Sustainability Charter.

Acutely conscious of the airport's environmental impact, TAG focuses on noise, waste, biodiversity, emissions and carbon reduction. Indeed, TAG is legally bound to be carbon neutral by 2019.

Noise is the main concern locally, and TAG has introduced a Quiet Flying Program as a result of forming a development group tasked with delivering a set of procedures that would be safe, operational, practicable, and that would demonstrably reduce noise and the number of people affected. A test flight was arranged so that group members could appreciate the issue from the air.

TAG is hoping to introduce controlled air space around the airport, which should improve safety and efficiency, and the proposal will go out to consultation early in 2014. Brandon pointed out that there is in fact temporary controlled air space locally during the Air Shows.

The airport aims to reduce waste as much as possible by reducing, reusing, recycling and recovery. Suitable waste goes to an anaerobic digestion facility at Heathrow, which leaves very little to go to landfill.

It is policy to increase biodiversity and planning and procedures always take this into account.

With regard to emissions, Brandon explained that modern planes produce less NO<sub>2</sub>. He added that RBC has 13 air quality monitors around the borough and the only one that ever records high levels of NO<sub>2</sub> is that at Junction 4a on the M3, due entirely to vehicular traffic. By contrast, the airport consistently records very clean air because only the very latest aircraft can use it. Moreover, a NO<sub>x</sub> charge is used to ensure reduced emissions.

The TAG Farnborough Airport Environmental Fund, administered by RBC, provides grants for local groups and organisations for environmental projects. TAG are obliged to make a contribution to the fund for every aircraft movement.

The airport reduces carbon through sourcing energy, monitoring and control of energy use, investment in low-cost energy plant and equipment, and through effective communication. Its carbon footprint is a relatively low 5000 tons CO<sub>2</sub>, which has been achieved through a process of mapping, reduction and optimisation, with neutrality projected for 2019. Only two other airports in the UK are doing better.

As well as the growth in movements, the reduction in emissions and carbon neutrality, the future should see the creation of up to 1500 new jobs, at all levels. The £150,000,000 investment is paying dividends for TAG and for Farnborough, though perhaps more could be done to bridge the divide between the town and its world famous airport.

Brandon generously stayed to answer a wide range of questions, and left a general feeling of confidence in the future of Farnborough's greatest asset, and pride the fact that our rich aviation heritage continues.