

TAG Farnborough Airport: with Brandon O'Reilly - 24th June 2019



The Farnborough Society was delighted to welcome Brandon, the CEO of Farnborough Airport to give an update on the many exciting developments that have occurred since he last came to talk to us, during the consultation on raising the number of movements to 50,000 p.a. It proved to be a very interesting and informative evening.

Brandon began with a brief summary of the history of aviation in Farnborough, from its beginnings as a site for flying the balloons constructed in Aldershot, through Samuel Cody's ground-breaking first British flight in a powered aeroplane, the development of Farnborough as a research and development centre, and the introduction of the world-famous Farnborough International Airshow in 1948.

He showed us a number of historic photos of the airfield which he contrasted with images of the airport today, with its award-winning architecture and scrupulous cleanliness. This is the high standard that his customers demand and that has made TAG Farnborough Airport, the only dedicated business airport in England, the great success that it is.

Brandon went on the point out two key buildings, beginning with the FlightSafety International facility, where pilots from around the world train and retrain on flight simulators. And the Aviator Hotel, with its distinctive design based on air currents over wings, is owned and operated by TAG, and was conceived initially to provide accommodation for elite travellers and their air crews, though it has become popular with the local community.

At 35%, TAG Farnborough has the highest market share in the South East, though the number of movements is well below the 50,000 limit. The current number of weekend movements is c. 8,900.

The aims laid out in TAG's Master Plan, which was produced in 2009, were:

- Grow Air Traffic Movements (ATM) sustainably
 - Stage / Chapter 4 only
 - Achieve Carbon Neutrality
 - Create up to 1,500 new jobs with ATM growth
- Establish Class D controlled airspace
- Retain No 1 position in key customer polls
- Support Farnborough International Airshow
- Attract major manufacturer to establish MRO
- Acquire additional land to support future growth
- Close engagement with local community

Brandon went on to talk about how these aims have been met. With regard to engagement with the local community, the Farnborough Aerodrome Consultative Committee was formed, a programme of education in aviation developed with Farnborough College of Technology, flying scholarships and engineering apprenticeships introduced, a quiet flying programme implemented, and carbon neutrality achieved. Although still current, the Master Plan is due for review shortly.

TAG Farnborough Airport hosts the biennial Farnborough International Airshow, of course, and Brandon confirmed that there will be no public days from 2020, when it will become solely a trade show, with a strong focus on engineering opportunities for young people. The new exhibition centre will play a key role in accommodating exhibitors from around the world.

The most recent development saw TAG successfully persuade Gulfstream to relocate their maintenance facility to Farnborough from Luton Airport, and construction has now begun. This will bring approximately 400 new jobs, plus training opportunities for local people.

Brandon finished on a lighter note by telling us of the airport's popularity as a location for feature films, before generously spending a good deal of time answering questions.

The packed audience showed that there is great interest in our airport, and Brandon certainly delivered. The Farnborough Society is extremely grateful to him for giving us so much of his time and for keeping us informed and entertained in equal measure.



Artist's impression of the Gulfstream RMO