



Gatwick Airport Consultative Committee
CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REVIEW 2023-24



FOREWORD



TOM CROWLEY
CHAIRMAN

WELCOME, to GATCOM's 2023/24 annual review.

I would like to thank all members of GATCOM and the Passenger Advisory Group (PAG) for their work during the year. Special thanks are due to Samantha Williams and Claire Booth, Chair and Vice Chair of our Passenger Advisory Group(PAG); Helyn Clack, Vice Chair of GATCOM, Mike George, GATCOM's lead member for Noise, Monique Smart GATCOM's Secretary and Graham Lake our independent technical advisor.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Crowley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tom Crowley
Chair, GATCOM



WHAT IS GATCOM?

GATCOM is the Airport Consultative Committee for London Gatwick. It is a statutory requirement, under Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982, for all UK airports “to provide adequate facilities for consultation with respect to any matter concerning the management or administration of the airport which affects the interests of users of the airport, local authorities and any other organisation representing the interests of persons concerned with the locality in which the airport is situated”.

We were established in 1956, two years before the late Queen opened the airport. We currently have twenty-eight members including representatives of four county councils, six district and borough councils and four parish councils together with thirteen members who represent environment groups, local business interests, the travel and aviation sectors and airport employees. Details of our current membership can be found on our [website](#).

Our members are very much aware that the airport provides significant economic benefits on a local, regional and national scale but they also recognise that these benefits can come at a cost to local people’s quality of life and to the environment and that these impacts must be minimised and mitigated.

GATCOM acts as a “critical friend” to the airport, in accordance with the principles listed in the Department for [Transport’s Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees](#). We strive to be: Independent, Representative, Knowledgeable, Transparent, and Constructive.

We regularly consider strategic issues relating to the operation and development of London Gatwick. Wherever possible we aim to work through consensus or, where that is not possible, to agree on what needs to be addressed if a course of action is pursued by the airport.

We aim to:

- Foster communication and build understanding between the airport and its users, local authorities and interest groups;
- Consider and comment upon the impacts of the airport’s administration, operation and development.



HOW WE OPERATE



GATCOM meets in public four times a year. After the COVID pandemic we decided to alternate between virtual and in-person meetings. This pattern was agreed in response to the views of some members who wanted to reduce travel and, initially at least, to reduce exposure to infection. It was agreed again this year to continue with this pattern of meetings.

Our agendas and minutes are published on our [website](#).

Key issues that GATCOM regularly address fall under the following headings:

- Noise
- Airspace Modernisation
- Airport growth and Sustainable Development
- Community and the Local Economy

We also have a Steering Group comprising fifteen GATCOM members. It meets in private four times a year to consider emerging issues, review GATCOMs Work Plan and makes recommendations to GATCOM. Its deliberations are captured in a report which forms part of the following GATCOM agenda.

The third key part of our structure is the Passenger Advisory Group (PAG) which is a diverse group of sixteen unpaid volunteers, drawn from all walks of life, who are appointed by Gatwick Airport Limited (GAL) after an open recruitment exercise open to anyone living within a reasonable distance from the

airport. In addition, five other members of GATCOM serve on PAG. These are the GATCOM Chair and Vice Chair, an airline representative, ABTA and “Which” representatives.

PAG provides feedback to GAL and their partners, in relation to all aspects of the passenger experience whilst at the airport. PAG also looks at some ancillary aspects of the airport, such as surface access travel to the airport both rail and non-rail. PAG reports to GATCOM quarterly on its activities and recommendations.

Since April 2014, GAL has been licensed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to operate under a [Commitments Framework](#) where London Gatwick’s service levels and charges are agreed with its airline customers in a set of “Commitments” which are then endorsed by the CAA. These Commitments determine what London Gatwick can charge its airline customers for providing services and also define quality standards.

As part of the Commitments Framework the CAA gave PAG a formal role in the airport’s consultation processes to input the passengers’ perspective in the development of the airport’s Capital Investment Plan and resilience planning for the airport. PAG reports its contributions to this process at the quarterly meetings of GATCOM.

More information about PAG and its work can be found on our [website](#).



THE YEAR IN CONTEXT

2023/24 has seen further substantial progress in the airport's return to normal following the COVID 19 pandemic.

Passenger numbers in 2023 reached 40.9 million – 88 per cent of the 46.6 million passengers per annum (mppa) seen in 2019. The recovery is all the more significant considering the dramatic downturn caused by COVID which saw a low of 6.3mppa in 2021.

The upturn in activity has brought with it much improved financial results. GAL reported a profit of £314.8 million in 2023 which built on the 2022 profit of £196.5m. These results contrast with the losses of £465m and £371m in 2020 and 2021 respectively.



GATCOM'S ACTIVITIES DURING 2023/24

Typically, our meetings cover a mix of information updates as well as consideration of policy and development matters. Each meeting considers a detailed report from GAL's Chief Executive, Stewart Wingate, about current performance and significant issues at the airport. This generates questions and discussion and provides a valuable opportunity for GATCOM members to engage with Stewart.

In addition, during this year we introduced a standing agenda item that enables GATCOM members to give notice of questions they wish to raise, about any relevant matter, at the meeting. This has encouraged and enabled members to become even more involved. The questions and answers received under this item during the year can be viewed in the minutes of each meeting [here](#).

Our national body, UKACC, held its [annual meeting](#) at Heathrow in November 2023. These gatherings enable best practice to be considered and shared. In conjunction with the Department for Transport, UKACC carried out a review of working methods of the 24 ACCs throughout the UK. This included details of whether ACCs were meeting government guidelines such as publishing their contact details, memberships, constitutions, calendar of meetings, agenda papers and minutes. Transparency of ACCs and their work is of vital importance in helping to build trust with

a wide range of interested parties around airports, including local communities impacted by an airport's operation and aircraft overflight and noise.

The results were anonymised and analysed on a "Red/Amber/Green" basis. Individual ACCs were told where they stood within the table. The research concluded that GATCOM meets all the DfT's expectations - see our press release [here](#). This is very much due to the hard work and dedication of our members, their colleagues and also very much a result of the support we receive from Gatwick Airport Limited.

Significant issues on GATCOM's agendas during the year included the following matters:

- London Gatwick's plans for growth
- GATCOM's role in the DCO process
- Sustainable development commitments
- The airport and the local economy
- Noise
- Departure noise limits and fines
- Surface access
- Airspace modernisation
- Gatwick and the local community
- Government and other statutory bodies' consultations



LONDON GATWICK'S PLANS FOR GROWTH

We are regularly updated on GAL's proposals for major growth involving the bringing into routine use the existing emergency/standby runway. In pursuance of these proposals GAL applied for a Development Consent Order (DCO), under The Planning Act 2008, on 6 July 2023. The DCO process was created by the 2008 Act to provide a more efficient and effective way to consider and decide proposals for major infrastructure projects of national importance.

GAL was informed by the Planning Inspectorate in August 2023 that its application had been accepted for consideration following the initial assessment for compliance with the statutory pre-submission consultation requirements.

At the request of the Gatwick Airport Conservation Campaign (GACC), and in the light of the imminent DCO hearings, at our January meeting we received a presentation from The New Economics Forum giving their assessment of the economics of air travel. It sought to challenge many of the arguments that are employed to promote air travel. A copy of the presentation can be seen [here](#).



GATCOM'S ROLE IN THE DCO PROCESS



GATCOM decided at its January 2023 meeting that it would play a formal role as an interested party in the DCO process. We had responded to all previous consultations in relation to the project and in our responses, we had stressed the need for measures to minimise impacts, mitigate their effects and secure appropriate infrastructure.

We held a special GATCOM meeting on 26 October 2023 to consider whether the airport's application had addressed the issues we raised at previous stages during the evolution of the project, and to agree our formal representations in response. These were submitted to the Inspectorate on 27 October 2023 and can be seen [here](#).

Whilst it has long been recognised that the nature of our committee, and the diverse composition of our membership, mean that it is not possible or right for us to pass judgement on fundamental or controversial issues, such as whether or not the DCO application should be approved, we do have an important function in explaining the process and in seeking and expressing common ground.

All the details of the Northern Runway Project can be found on the Planning Inspectorates website [here](#).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT COMMITMENTS



In 2001 GAL signed a legal agreement with West Sussex County Council and Crawley Borough Council under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (following consultation with seven other local authorities) which underpins the airport's approved growth plans. The agreement has been renewed on a regular basis and was last updated in 2022 -running through until the end of 2024.

The [agreement](#) contains obligations which outline how the airport's operation, growth and environmental impacts will be managed responsibly. It underpins the important relationship between the airport and its local authorities with responsibility for planning, environmental management and highways.

As part of the DCO application GAL are in negotiations with Local Authorities on a new section 106 agreement, a [draft](#) of which was submitted to The Planning Inspectorate in the spring of 2024. The draft contains provisions relating to the airport's sustainable development ambitions.

There was discussion at the initial DCO hearings about the draft agreement and these included confirmation by GAL that the existing agreement will be rolled forward pending the results of the DCO application. GAL also stated that if the DCO is refused they would need to take stock of the obligations proposed in the draft agreement that was submitted in the spring.

In 2021 GAL published its Second Decade of Change sustainability policy covering the period to 2030. GATCOM receives and considers reports on these topics periodically.

More details about GAL's sustainable development commitments and obligations and its action plans are available on the airport's [website](#).

THE AIRPORT AND THE LOCAL ECONOMY

Given the important part that the airport plays in the local economy, we periodically discuss the steps that the airport is taking with partner organisations to maximise the economic benefits.

GAL hosted the second annual Economic Summit in November 2023. The keynote speaker was Baroness Margaret Ford of Cunninghame, who was appointed as GAL's new chair in September 2023. Further details can be seen [here](#).



NOISE

GATCOM considers noise in a number of ways. This includes input to the monitoring and review of the airport's statutory Noise Action Plan, responding to government consultations on night flights and related matters. GATCOM appoints seven members to the airport's [Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group \(NaTMAG\)](#) and receives regular reports back from that body. GATCOM's chair and vice chair are also members of the airport's [Noise Management Board \(NMB\)](#). The chair of the NMB is a member of GATCOM and reports to the committee at each meeting.



NOISE MANAGEMENT BOARD (NMB)

The Noise Management Board was reconstituted in 2019 following an extensive review of the operation of the previous Board. Under the 2019 arrangements a Noise Management Board Executive (NEX) oversees and coordinates the work of a Community Forum and Delivery Group.

In 2020 GATCOM agreed that the NMB chair should have a seat on GATCOM to strengthen connections between the bodies. The Chair, Jonathan Drew, reports to each meeting of GATCOM.

During 2023/24, as the second term of the NMB was coming to an end, GAL initiated a review of the way the board had operated. It is expected that a revised board will continue to operate following the review. Transitional arrangements are in place and the airport's statutory Noise Action Plan contains a commitment to maintain and support the NMB.

NOISE AND TRACK MONITORING ADVISORY GROUP (NaTMAG)

NaTMAG brings together representatives from GAL, the Department for Transport, NATS (Air Traffic Control), airlines and local authorities to discuss a wide range of noise and track keeping issues at the airport.

It monitors track keeping performance, continuous descent operations, night engine testing and ground noise and noise complaints. The group meets quarterly, and the minutes of the meetings and reports are available on the [GAL website](#)

The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 require airport operators to develop noise action plans designed to manage noise and effects arising from aircraft departing from and arriving at their airport, including reduction if necessary. The guidance states that the airport operator will present its revised action plan to the airport consultative committee for comment after which the airport operator will reflect on comments raised and include them in the revised plan together with a response to the issues raised.

The progress made by GAL in delivering the actions contained in the Noise Action Plan (NAP) is reported quarterly to NaTMAG and annually to GATCOM.

The NAP is a living document and is reviewed every five years. The [revised plan for the period 2024-2028](#) was submitted to Defra in September 2023. Feedback from officials at the Department for Transport has indicated that the submitted NAP is considered acceptable but is still with the Minister for approval. This has turned into a protracted process, and, before the General Election was called, I wrote to the Minister seeking expedition of the process.

NOISE



NIGHT NOISE

In common with Heathrow and Stansted, London Gatwick Airport is designated under section 80 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 for the purposes of the regulation of noise. Noise from aircraft using the 'designated' aerodromes is regulated according to notices and directions made under section 78 of the 1982 Act. This gives the Secretary of State powers to direct aircraft operators using these airports, or the airport operators themselves, to adopt procedures which limit noise and vibration. The Government has imposed restrictions on night flights at London Gatwick for many years.

The DfT launched a review of the night flights regime in December 2020. It was a two-stage consultation process which sought views on the current regimes at the designated airports beyond 2022, and night flights in the national context.

GATCOM has previously responded to consultations in relation to night noise seeking early views and evidence on policy options for the government's future night flight policy at the designated airports beyond 2024, and nationally. [Click here](#) to see GATCOM's response.

Following the initial consultation the DfT consulted on what a night-time noise abatement objective should be for the noise designated airports from October 2025. [Click here](#) to see GATCOM's response to that consultation.

The second stage of the consultation on future night flight restrictions between 2025 and 2028 was issued in February 2024. DfT officers attended the NATMAG meeting on 21 March 2024 and then GATCOM in May 2024 to give a presentation on the details of the consultation. GATCOM's response to the consultation was agreed in May and can be found [here](#).



DEPARTURE NOISE LIMITS AND FINES

At our July meeting Andy Sinclair, Head of Noise and Airspace Strategy provided a short presentation detailing the GAL review of Departure Noise Limits and Fines. He explained that these are part of a set of statutory noise controls defined by the DfT that GAL are responsible for administering. Through the NMB, GAL have conducted a review.

The proposed regime results in aircraft being clustered into groups - based on their assigned noise certification / Quota Count (QC) value for departure and arrival - and differential noise limits applied to different groups. This allows for a more targeted system better suited to the airline fleets operated from London Gatwick. 'Fixed' noise monitors positioned at the end of each runway pick up when there is a breach. The associated fines - which would go directly to the Gatwick Airport Community Trust - had been increased and structured to be more punitive in the sensitive night period.

Some final engagement was taking place with airlines prior to a transition period that was due to start in late 2023. Following the transition period the proposed scheme would then be submitted to the DfT for approval. It was hoped the new scheme would be in place by Quarter 3 of 2024. When introduced it is anticipated to be one of the most innovative and challenging schemes in the UK.

GATCOM asked why GAL have proposed lower fines than some other airports and that some other airports have decided on fines that increase further depending on how far above the limit they exceed. GAL explained that the proposals for London Gatwick are designed around the lighter fleet mix operated at London Gatwick the more stringent noise limits and it is related to the extent of the impact.

It was confirmed that this departure noise limits proposal would operate alongside the existing air traffic movement and culminative QC caps that limited noise in the core night period (2330-0600). Beyond this scheme for the monitoring of departure noise breaches GAL will continue to assess noise via a fleet of noise monitors positioned up to 20 miles from the airport.



SURFACE ACCESS

November's GATCOM welcomed Emily James, Stakeholder Engagement Lead, Great British Railways Transition Team, who provided the committee with a [presentation](#) and overview of her team's work and plans for rail reform. Ms. James explained that GBRTT's purpose was to create a simpler, better railway for everyone and referred to the governments 'Plan for Rail' that referred to bringing together track and train with decisions being more joined up and made closer to the customer. She went on to detail some of the work that the team had already been involved in including a call for evidence on the long-term strategy for rail and working closely with the DfT on the first National Rail Accessibility Strategy that was hoped to go out to consultation.

At the same meeting we welcomed Tim Aveline and Paul Codd from Govia Thameslink who provided a presentation and update on rail services in and around London Gatwick. They explained the improvements work at Gatwick Station including double the space for passengers, the new track layout, five new lifts, eight escalators and four new staircases which make the station more accessible and allow passengers to pass through more quickly and with ease.

They went on to detail some data on passengers and the fact that Govia Thameslink is a commuter-based network but the data for London Gatwick does show peaks around holiday times for travellers. Paul also explained the airport specific marketing campaigns with an 'out of London' focus pushing for rail travel where car use is higher.



AIRSPACE MODERNISATION

The Government directed the CAA to prepare and maintain a coordinated strategy and plan for the use and [modernisation](#) of UK airspace up to 2040. This reflects the UK's role as part of the Global Air Navigation System agreed by 190+ States, and the Single European Sky involving the 43 States participating in [Eurocontrol](#). These together help to ensure that aircraft operations are safe and consistent around the world.

Changes in the way airspace in the skies above and surrounding London Gatwick is managed feature regularly in GATCOM's work and reports. For London Gatwick the Airspace Modernisation activities currently fall under two headings:

Future Airspace Strategy Implementation – South (FASI-S). This is the complex, comprehensive and long running programme within the overarching UK [Airspace Modernisation Strategy](#) published by the CAA. FASI-S sets out the initiatives and processes needed to update the UK airspace system across the southern half of the UK, through the [redesign](#) of the airspace route structure and the application of new technologies and procedures. This will help to deliver quicker, quieter, and cleaner flights, and will increase airspace capacity helping to reduce delays. Gatwick Airport, given the scale of its operation and its location below the most congested airspace in Europe, is an important FASI-S stakeholder.

The process is governed by the CAA's CAP1616 airspace change rules. GAL passed its Stage 2 Gateway (options development and options appraisal) in October 2023. Stage 3 (Consultation Preparation) is currently paused, to allow for consideration of the concept of a Single Design Entity (SDE) that would take responsibility for airspace change across the UK. The scope, process, and timeline for the SDE is being developed by the DFT and CAA and will be subject to a publicly available consultation.

The impact of the SDE and possible delay to GAL's Airspace Change Process is currently unknown. However, GAL is exploring with the CAA, ACOG and NATS opportunities for an initial (split) deployment of the FASI-S route structure to the south of London Gatwick. The deployment split process will be captured and explained in the upcoming UK Airspace Change Masterplan Iteration 3. (Iteration 2 [CAP2312B](#) was published in 2022).

GAL (with NATS) held stakeholder engagement sessions in January to introduce the ACOG-led public engagement exercise which set out Airspace Change Masterplan Iteration 3 (including the mechanism for split deployment of the GAL FASI-South airspace change intended to accelerate implementation).

Route 4 is the departure route for aircraft taking off from Gatwick's runway 26 and that then head towards the west. Changes to the route have been under consideration for many years. They are subject to a CAA CAP 1616 process, Stage 2 of which has now been completed and GAL have progressed to Stage 3 of the airspace change process which requires a full options appraisal and public consultation. Work on Stage 3 has commenced in preparation for a full consultation planned to start in Quarter 4 2024. The Airspace Office at GAL provide regular updates on these projects to GATCOM, the GATCOM Steering Group, the NMB and NaTMAG.

GATWICK AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITY



GAL is active in the local community in numerous ways and periodically their activities are reported in to GATCOM. A good example of this was in April 2023 when Andrew Bickerdike from SASH Charity (Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust), GAL's Charity Partner, attended the committee and gave an overview of their partnership. This included:

- A [video](#) about the charity partnership that showed the deep links between the airport community and the hospital community.
- A 2023 thank you Gatwick [video](#).

In January we received a presentation about various aspects of the education programme delivered by GAL including the newly opened STEM centre, the Endeavour STEM Programme, Career Live Broadcasts, Apprenticeships and Graduate Programme. This is generating a significant number of engagement opportunities for school children and students from across Sussex, Surrey and Kent. Details of GAL Education Programmes can be found [here](#).

GOVERNMENT AND OTHER STATUTORY BODIES' CONSULTATIONS

In addition to all the consultations already mentioned throughout the report, during the year we considered and responded to the following:

[CAA consultation on Contracts and Commitments](#)

[DfT - Night time Noise Abatement](#)

[DfT - 2040 zero emissions airport target](#)

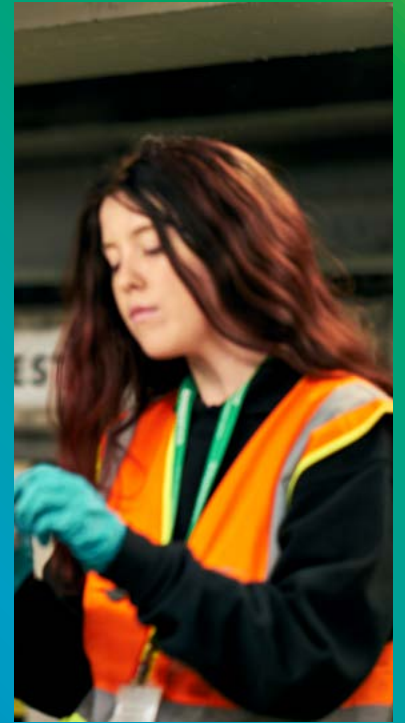
[DfT - Airlines Slot Allocation Reforms](#)

[ACOG engagement - Airspace Change London South](#)

[GAL - Proposed Changes to DCO](#)

In formulating our responses to consultations, as well as expressing agreed positions, when appropriate, we also record and convey minority views.





IMPROVING THE WAY WE WORK



In November 2023 we held our third GATCOM awayday. We invited all members, their support officers and senior GAL staff to the awayday. It was a productive session and was written up for the subsequent Steering Group and GATCOM meetings. Full details of the session and its conclusions and resulting actions can be viewed [here](#). We plan to have our next awayday in November 2024.

THE PASSENGER PERSPECTIVE – PAG

Over the past year PAG has been delighted to continue working closely with GAL, as the airport returns to a position which is very close to pre COVID performance levels.

There have been a number of personnel changes in respect of both GAL staff who directly interact with PAG and within PAG itself. As a result, PAG has successfully recruited three new members. Further recruitment is expected in 2024.

PAG has been consulted on a range of important projects such as the refurbishments of both Terminals and the two-phase expansion plans for both Terminal buildings. We were delighted to be involved at an early stage on both and make representations on behalf of the passenger.

Some of the highlights of the year have included:

- Considering consultation about the Capital Investment Plan and therefore have an input in the direction and priority of major projects from our perspective. This is a responsibility which is ongoing.
- Attending forums such as the Transport and also the Technology Forums.
- Attending regular meetings of The Independent Gatwick Accessibility Panel (IGAP) having an input and making them aware of the work we do.
- Briefing GAL's Chief Executive about key concerns resulting in some proactive work e.g. in relation to car parks.

The sub groups of PAG continue to meet and critically examine all elements of the passenger journey from surface access to retail and food and beverage, special assistance to customer services, car parking to security and UK Border Force, highlighting concerns and making recommendations to GAL as a result of PAGs observations.

PAG's work relies heavily on the engagement of GAL and the dedication of all of the group's members who are volunteers. There is a considerable time commitment to the role of a PAG volunteers which deserves recognition here.



LOOKING AHEAD

We will continue to deal with many of the same issues either because they have a long gestation period or are cyclical in nature. The emphasis and relative priority attached to these matters will shift from time to time and other environmental, economic, social and political factors might bring new challenges for GATCOM. Our focus over the coming months will be very much concerned with the DCO hearings and deliberations. A decision by the Secretary of State is anticipated in February 2025. GATCOM will need to consider the consequences of the eventual decision, whichever way it goes.

Other key issues on our agenda during the coming year will include:

- Airspace modernisation
- Responding to further consultations from the Department for Transport.
- Noise Management Board review – this is likely to be completed in summer 2024. We will need to consider what if any changes might be needed to the ways in which we work with the reconstituted NMB.

In addition, PAG will be heavily involved in many important issues including:

- New wayfinding strategy, departure lounge expansions and refurbishments.
- PAG will also continue its work to monitor the passenger perspective through its working groups covering car parks, surface access rail and non-rail, security and Border Force, Special Assistance, and retail plus the communications group which looks at how the airport deals with feedback and communications.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report. Please let me know if you have any comments or questions by emailing secretary@gatcom.org.uk



The GATCOM logo is displayed in a white rounded rectangle in the top left corner. The word "GATCOM" is written in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. A blue swoosh underline starts under the 'G' and curves under the 'M'.

GATCOM

MORE INFORMATION

GATCOM has 28 appointed representatives from a wide range of interests including local authorities, community and environmental groups, civil aviation, passengers, businesses, tourism and airport employees. Representatives from the Department for Transport, NATS, and Gatwick's Air Traffic Control are also present at the main Committee meetings when needed, together with Gatwick Airport Limited's Chief Executive Officer and his senior management team.

GATCOM meets four times a year and considers issues and questions in connection with the operation and development of Gatwick and its effect on local communities, passengers, airlines and other users of the airport.

CONTACT

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