

**HEATHROW AIRPORT PASSENGER SERVICES SUB- COMMITTEE (PSSC) RESPONSE
TO THE CAA CONSULTATION ON ISSUES AFFECTING PASSENGERS'
SURFACE ACCESS TO UK AIRPORTS (CAP 1364)**

Introduction

1. The Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee (HACC) is an independent statutory committee first convened in 1948. It meets quarterly to discharge its role of fostering communication and understanding between the airport's owners and operator and its users, both passengers and airlines, local authorities and interest groups. An important part of the HACC is the Passenger Services Sub-Committee (PSSC) which represents the particular interests of all passengers.

2. The CAA have issued a consultation document asking for input on issues affecting passengers' surface access to UK airports. The document concentrates on road access and leaves on one side the issue of rail access. The CAA are concerned that airports could be using their dominant position in the provision of both facilities (eg. forecourt access) and the service itself (eg. car parking) in an inappropriate manner. They are therefore seeking input from stakeholders in order to determine how they should proceed in terms of both their statutory and competition responsibilities. They are also asking how well passengers are informed about the surface transport options available and the relative costs.

Executive Summary

3. We consider the CAA review has identified the key issues on the market structure of surface access to airports.

4. We believe that frequent travellers are reasonably well informed of the various options available. However infrequent travellers would be better served by improving airport websites to include listing all those who offer surface access in its various forms.

5. We support the way forward proposed by the CAA and have two particular recommendations which we believe should be a part of the CAA findings:

- a. Airports should provide a free-of-charge drop-off facility with ready access to the departure terminal.
- b. The cost of car parking should be reasonable and fair. The CAA should use its statutory or competition powers to make the cost and pricing structure more transparent and ensure that airports are not using their dominant position to overcharge for parking services.

RESPONSE TO SPECIFIC QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE CAA

1. Have the CAA identified the key issues on market structure within

their review?

6. In general we consider the CAA review covers all the key issues of the market structure from forecourt access for the differing modes of road transport to the provision of parking both on and off airport. The issue of using revenue from airport surface access to defray airport operating costs is also addressed.

2. Have we any views on the market provision of airport operators providing services used to access the airport?

7. The issue of a free drop-off facility is mentioned in the report. In our view, it is essential that drop-off is available free of charge. Furthermore, the drop off point must be within a short walk of the terminal so that passengers can check-in or access security rapidly on arrival. It is not acceptable to have a remote drop-off which requires the use of a shuttle bus. As far as pick up is concerned, it is reasonable to use a readily accessible short term car park within easy walking distance. We strongly support the introduction of 15 minutes of free parking in short term car parks. This would reduce congestion on the forecourt and discourage drivers from orbiting the terminal. It is unlikely to greatly affect car parking revenue as many people would exceed the time limit, but it would be perceived as a positive move by the airport. In any event there should be strict enforcement of the time vehicles spend on the forecourt.

8. Airports should provide feeder parks for taxis and minicabs without pre-arranged fares. Charges should be reasonable in an attempt to prevent drivers of companies such as Uber from loitering on residential or private roads (a particular problem at Heathrow). In a move to address this problem, Heathrow is planning to introduce a parking area for independent operators and we strongly commend this initiative.

9. Charges for buses and people movers should be flexible to allow for both the different sizes of vehicles and the differing frequencies of use. Low frequency users should not be priced out of the market by high annual charges.

3. Have we any views on how well informed consumers are about surface access options and what is most important to them?

10. In general, we agree with the CAA that high frequency airport users who are probably travelling on business are quite well informed about the options for surface access. Those who do not use an airport very often may well be less well informed; these people are likely to be leisure travellers and therefore more cost conscious. We make some suggestions as to how the situation might be improved in response to question five.

4. Have the CAA identified the key issues related to the distribution of airport car parking? What would improve outcome to consumers?

11. There is clearly an environmental argument to set the price of airport car parking at a sufficiently high level to encourage passengers to use public transport. However, this can be difficult for PRMs and travellers with small children and/or a mound of luggage. The use of a private vehicle and a car parking facility may be the only sensible option. This issue of parking charges has been clearly identified in the CAA Review.

12. We would recommend the CAA use its statutory or competition powers to gain visibility of the cost and pricing structure of airport car parking and, if found to be unreasonable, take appropriate action.

5. Have Stakeholders any views on how information on airport surface access could be better presented to consumers?

13. Consumers could become better informed on the official options for airport surface access if the airport website was extended to include all those offering surface transport (ie taxi companies, bus companies, car parking, train networks). Airports may well argue such inclusion implies a recommendation. It is well known that there are unscrupulous operators whose offering is well below acceptable standards. However, it is possible for airports to introduce some basic operating standards before listing an organisation on its website (eg The Gatwick Approved Operators Scheme). The current Heathrow information leaflet is fairly comprehensive but does not include Heathrow Connect. Heathrow's website transport pages show the Heathrow Express, the underground and National Express on the front page whereas the Heathrow Connect only appears on the second page after clicking on the train icon. As an example of good practice, surface transport is given good coverage in BA's Highlife magazine.

Conclusion

14. In conclusion, we believe the most important surface access issues to the passenger are:

- a. Rapid reliable access to the departure terminal to avoid missing the flight - with free-of-charge drop-off.
- b. Reasonably rapid and easy access to taxi, bus, train or car park on return.
- c. Reasonable and transparent pricing of surface access - particularly car parking.

Further Information

Professor Roderick Smith HACC Chair rodericksmith@hacc.org.uk

Martyn Hurst HACC Technical Advisor martyn.hurst@tiscali.co.uk

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