

## **PLACE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

25 September 2014

**PRESENT** – Councillor Long (in the Chair); Councillors Baldwin, Carson, Cossins, Culley, Grundy, Harman, L Hughes, Lawton, EA Richmond and Wright. (11)

**APOLOGIES** – Councillor Lawton. (1)

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE** – Councillor DA Lyonette and Professor Peter Nears, Strategic Planning Director, The Peel Group. (2)

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE** – Ian Williams, Director of Economic Growth, John Anderson, Assistant Director – Economic Initiative, Steve Petch, Place Strategy Manager, Roy Merrett, Development Manager and Karen Graves, Democratic Officer.

**P18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** – Councillor DA Lyonette declared an interest as he was Chair of the Airport Consultative Committee.

**P19. DURHAM TEES VALLEY AIRPORT – MASTER PLAN** – The Director of Economic Growth submitted a report (previously circulated) presenting the Durham Tees Valley Airport (DTVA) Master Plan together with the critical evidence that underpinned that plan.

It was stated that Peel Group, the owners of the Airport, had produced a Master Plan with the objective of improving its financial and operating base in order to create more certainty about its future serving the Tees Valley, Durham and Yorkshire economies. Peel Group has led this work in close liaison with Tees Valley Unlimited, Stockton Borough Council and Darlington Borough Council.

Stockton Borough Council took the lead for public sector partners and co-ordinated the input which concluded with Stockton Borough Council considering the Master Plan and evidence behind it through its Scrutiny Committee.

References were made to the draft conclusions and recommendations of Stockton Borough Council's Regeneration and Transport Select Committee which could usefully inform this Scrutiny Committee's considerations. It was further reported that Stockton Borough Council would welcome this Scrutiny Committee's feedback prior to finalisation of the report.

Professor Peter Nears, Strategic Planning Director, Peel Group addressed Scrutiny Committee and provided details of the current position of DTVA, case studies relating to other Airports in the UK and the Master Plan of DTVA 2020 and beyond.

Discussion ensued on the benefits of the Regional Airports Sector, and the effect of the recession on regional airports including DTVA.

Members were advised that maintaining the routes to Schiphol Airport (Amsterdam) would remain a priority, although in addition, DTVA wanted the opportunity to gain air slots in any new capacity in SE once it became available. In relation to the reinstatement of a domestic route to Heathrow Airport, Scrutiny were advised that Tees Valley Unlimited would support any work and lobbying to the Airports Commission and Transport Select Committee to ensure a certain proportion of flights are ring-fenced to regional airports.

It was also stated that foreign investors had recently withdrawn from UK Airports as UK Aviation forecasts of January 2013 showed little future growth for many regional airports. The financial situation of DTVA was not unique and recently Plymouth Airport and Manston Airport had both closed, two Airports had been nationalised and several regional Airports had sold to the private sector.

Professor Nears referred to Manchester Airport proposals for the creation of 400,000 square metres of business space including manufacturing, logistics, offices, hotel, conference, retail and leisure uses across a 150 acre former Green Belt site and stated that DTVA could also diversify in the same manner as it had assets of land.

Scrutiny Committee agreed that the Tees Valley needed to have an excellent infrastructure and be a strategic passenger hub incorporating rail, road and air especially with the Stockton and Darlington Railway 200 years anniversary celebrations in 2025.

References were made to the details within the Masterplan including a re-positioned airport rail station, features of both the Northside and Southside Employment Parks and the creation of a mixed-use neighbourhood encompassing substantial residential development with a core of local community services.

Professor Nears informed Committee that it was important to build a road on the south side of the site so that Peel Logistics could invest in new hangers to encourage business and general aviation users to DTVA.

Members then gave full consideration to the Executive Summary of the report of the Regeneration and Transport Select Committee of Stockton Borough Council and in doing so raised the following points/issues :-

- The leisure market should be encouraged as each flight brings people closer to Darlington and the surrounding area;
  - There was a need to retain what DTVA has i.e. routes to Schiphol and Aberdeen but also get back to a London hub;
  - Local people want the option of utilising DTVA as travelling to other Airports incurred further expense due to potential overnight stays, travel costs etc.
  - Members were not convinced that sufficient, robust marketing of the DTVA offer was being undertaken. It was suggested that many people were not aware that Schiphol existed and some believed that DTVA had been mothballed;
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- It was suggested that Darlington Together be utilised to advertise the Airport and the routes available and that DTVA talk to DBC's Business Engagement Team to reach potential business customers.
- The public are confused over the name of the airport as many motorway signs and the internet still refer to Teesside Airport;
- Although it was suggested that the name be changed, Professor Nears stated that operators and people visiting the area would see DTVA in relation to the Durham area;
- In order to maximise marketing of Schiphol and increase the current passenger base of 165,000 Peel Airports agreed that it needed to highlight and maximise business routes and destinations from Schiphol i.e. China;
- Para 1.8 is agreed and supported however it was suggested that local MP's, Biologics and Subsea be included/requested in the list of lobbyists;
- Members endorsed Paras 1.10 and 1.11;
- Members agreed that Para 1.13 needed to be strengthened with the inclusion of social/community infrastructure on any plans for housing on the site i.e. schools, GP etc.
- In relation to Para 1.17 Members wanted the phrase 'integrated transport' to be included as good road links were required for logistics companies; and
- Members agreed with the contents of Para 1.19.

**RESOLVED** – (a) That the thanks of this Scrutiny Committee be conveyed to Professor Peter Nears for his interesting and informative presentation.

(b) That there is an expectation that Peel Airports will continue its endeavours to secure the future of DTVA and that any future development is devoted to that end should planning permission be forthcoming.

(c) That Place Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the role of DTVA as an asset, essential to the economic growth of the Tees Valley and as an international gateway for businesses seeking global markets.

(d) That Place Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the current commercial pressures of DTVA but consider it essential that the link to the international hub at Schiphol and the Aberdeen route remain as a minimum.

(e) That Place Scrutiny Committee look forward to the possible restoration of a route to the south east and further commercial and leisure flights when the economy allows.

(f) That Place Scrutiny Committee would encourage Peel Holdings to embark on more imaginative methods of marketing routes including liaison with local companies to determine their needs.

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(g) That Place Scrutiny Committee acknowledges the commercial difficulties under which the Airport is operating and would support lobbying with other local authorities and MP's to amend Government regulations, which are at present disadvantageous, to ensure that DTVA remains viable.

(h) That Place Scrutiny Committee acknowledges DTVA could perform better if the integrated rail and road transport system were improved therefore Darlington Borough Council will work with the Tees Valley Local Enterprise Partnership to ensure that DTVA is properly integrated.

(i) That Peel Holdings should be aware that this Council would expect that appropriate infrastructure be put in place to support any future community development should planning permission be forthcoming.

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