Customer Survey Responses and Development Action Plan

January 2012
Introduction

During December 2011 and through into January 2012, we ran an online customer survey to enable us to measure a wide range of customer views of City Airport, including how well the operation is managed, the physical characteristics, suitability of charges, available facilities and customer service satisfaction. We extended this to include other businesses on the airfield that do not fall under our direct management, such as Flying Schools and The Airfield Lodge, to help us work with those businesses to improve the entire site.

To understand fully the responses it is important to understand the areas that City Airport Ltd, (the company which is tasked with the management of the airport) is responsible for and the areas in which we have little or no direct control.

City Airport Ltd is a company established and wholly owned by Peel Holdings Ltd to manage the operation of the Airport. The Airport land is owned by Manchester Ship Canal Developments Limited (MSCD - a joint venture between Peel and Manchester Council). There is often a misunderstanding that City Airport remains part of Peel Airports, however this is not the case. In 2010, City Airport was taken out of the Peel Airports venture when Vancouver Airport Services bought a majority stake in the Airport’s division. Thus City Airport Ltd now stands directly under Peel Holdings. City Airport Ltd operates the airfield in accordance with a Management Contract, within which we are tasked with breaking even financially. The wider airport site is outside this Management Contract, (i.e. income such as rents are paid directly to MSCD), and any financial surplus from this is being spent on the airfield by MSCD to improve the facilities on site.

Customer Survey

We received in excess of 200 individual responses, providing us with a wide range of views. Within the responses, we found praise for many aspects of the service we provide as well as some constructive, and some unconstructive, criticism in certain areas. We found that there were common areas where we were already aware of the need for improvement, as well as some excellent new suggestions in other areas.

We have studied the responses in great detail, examining each one on its own merits. From this study, we have formed an action plan for the next 1-2 years, and we aim to improve the services provided to our customers.

Aviation today and the future

Current general aviation trends across the UK have been challenging for the past few years. We have discussed this with several other airfields, and all have seen similar levels of decline in areas such as the number of PPL’s issued and levels of activity. However, we have seen growth in the number of newer generation small light aircraft and microlights. In response to this we have, over the last 3 years, held level the majority of our charges and, despite ever increasing running costs, we have successfully streamlined our staffing and challenged our spending, whilst at the same working to make improvements where we have been able. For example, we have installed additional runway drainage which has reduced airfield closures.

Our ultimate aim is to ensure that City Airport continues to be a sustainable aviation business, allowing general aviation, both private and commercial, to thrive and grow.
Recent developments

Before reading through the Survey responses, it is important to outline the changes and developments that have taken place at City Airport over the past 2-3 years. It is important because some of the survey comments are in response to these developments, either in a positive or negative light. Some changes may not be fully apparent to everyone, and many customers may be unaware they have been done or, in some cases, are on-going to address particular issues.

A selection of the changes and developments are summarised below, and separated into particular categories.

Airport Charges

As the country fell into recession, we froze the majority of our charges such as our landing fees. Additionally we actually reduced some landing charges such as Touch and Go’s for students (charged via the Flying Schools), to ease the burden on those learning to fly.

Aviation Fuel

It is common knowledge that there have been on-going prices rises for Avgas 100LL. As previously stated, City Airport Ltd is tasked with ensuring that our Management Contract breaks even financially. We have been aware for some time that our Avgas price was particularly high, but until recently we were unable to make any significant adjustments to the selling price. However, following a productive meeting with the landowner, and a new positive direction to stimulate activity, we were immediately able to reduce our selling price by 20p, bringing us in line with other airfields.

Many of you will be aware that a new fuel, Avgas UL91 has recently been introduced into the UK by Air Total. We have worked with Air Total to enable us to bring this fuel to our customers, and this will very shortly be available for sale. This is advantageous for aircraft that are approved to use the new fuel but which currently burn Avgas 100LL as UL91 will be cheaper, helping to reduce the cost of flying for users. UL91 is also approved for some Rotax engines so this means Microlight pilots will be able to fill up at the airport rather than having to transport Mogas to the airfield. However, we will continue to permit pilots to bring Mogas should they so wish. We have investigated fully the possibility of bring a Mogas supply to the airfield but this area has thrown up several difficulties not least obtaining Mogas from a supplied that can guarantee the quality for aviation use, and ensure it is ethanol free.

Runway Surfaces

Over the past 2 years, we have undertaken several projects to improve our runway surfaces. We graded a large 32x60m section of 09R/27L, graded an area on Runway 02/20 (known as the 20 hump), and also graded a section of runway 14/32. The airfield sits on an unstable sub-surface and we constantly find that new peaks and depressions occur. However, we will continue to monitor and plan each year to do additional grading where required.

3 years ago, we experienced a very wet winter and an area in the vicinity of holding point A3 was causing significant problems. We re-graded this area and installed reinforced matting, which has successfully eliminated any requirements to close this area in winter since the work was completed.
The airfield has a large structure of drains, some dating back to its original opening. In general, the airfield drains exceedingly well, although there are particular areas which suffer from extensive waterlogging after very significant rainfall. We are very keen to continue to reduce the number of closures due to waterlogging and so during the summers of 2010 and 2011 we installed new drains to serve areas of Runway 27L and 27R. These drains successfully alleviated some of the problem areas which were causing us to close and thus we have seen reduced closures due to waterlogging over the last 2 years. Further new drains are planned for 2012 and beyond.

City Heliport

Peel Holdings have renovated a large building on the West side of the Airfield and this is now opened as the ‘City Heliport’. It is hoped that this facility will embrace our existing commercial helicopter business and encourage additional use of the airfield. It is anticipated that growing this area of the business will also enable us to make improvements on the main airfield site.

Safety

During 2011 we sadly saw a tragic aircraft accident in which a pilot lost his life and another was significantly injured. We continue to work on various safety initiatives, through our Airport Safety Committee, to ensure that airport operations are as safe as we can possibly make them.

Communication

Over the past 3 years we have been keen to improve how we communicate with our customers. We established an Email Newsletter, which now has over 500 subscribers. We also developed the use of social sites including Facebook and Twitter, and these have helped us to ensure that we continue to communicate effectively. Our recent Customer Survey is the latest tool introduced to improve communication, by receiving feedback which we will use to develop our future strategies.

Facilities and social activities

During 2011, after the tenant had vacated the premises, Peel took the opportunity to fully refurbish the ‘Clubhouse’ facility, and it was renamed The Airfield Lodge. A new company has been engaged to manage the facility. It was a difficult time for The Lodge as they started their new business just as the summer flying season drew to a close. We have received positive feedback on the quality of the facility and noted concerns on some issues. These comments have been shared with the management team at the Lodge and we are now actively working with them to improve some of the areas of concern. We hope that over the coming months, pilots will notice significant improvements.

During 2011, after the very harsh winter, large areas of the apron and the area at the base of the Control Tower suffered surface damage, as concrete began to break up. We made numerous repairs to the apron, removed several pot-holes, resurfaced the area at the base of the Control Tower and installed new fencing. We plan over the next 1-2 years to extend this new fencing to the rest of the site.

We have worked with NATS and the CAA to hold Safety Evenings and presentations at the airfield and will continue to work with them and several other groups to bring more aviation related social activities to the site. We are also in discussions with various aviation groups and clubs to encourage them
to bring some of their activities to the airfield, with the aim of making City Airport a social hub for aviation activities in the North West.

With Peel’s backing, we have recently started to work with the Barton Heritage Society, who operate the Barton Visitor Centre and airfield tours, and we hope to develop a new improved Visitor Centre and Museum, thus ensuring that the airfield’s history is preserved and enhanced for all to enjoy. It is hoped that the facility will be relocated into the listed brick building by the airport entrance, which was the original Airport Terminal Building. Plans have been drawn up to fully restore this building.

The airfield site has been designated as an overflow car park area for the Salford City Stadium on match days and we are working with them to provide additional car parking space. This additional space will benefit airfield users, providing more spaces for our busy weekends during summer. We are also working hard to ensure that our existing customers are not inconvenienced by match parking and we are hopeful that the additional income will enable us to remove car park charges for all our customers.

**Events and Community**

We recognise the need to put City Airport ‘on the map’, both for pilots and the wider community. One way in which we have tried to do this is by holding the Annual Aviation Family Fun Day and Aircraft Fly-In. So far, this has been an overwhelming success, with our 2011 event raising over £4000 for charity and attracting thousands of members of the public and almost one hundred visiting aircraft. We intend to further enhance this event and are working towards organising additional events at the airfield.

During 2011 we continued with our Work Experience Placement Scheme and we have now started to forge even stronger links with local schools and groups, ensuring that City Airport remains a vital asset within the local community.

**Aircraft Maintenance**

As many of you will be aware the aircraft maintenance facility closed during 2011. We are committed to re-establishing this facility at the airfield and have the full support of Peel to do so. We are actively seeking a new tenant to take over the facility during 2012.
Survey Responses and our Action Plans

Over the following pages, we have provided a summary of the responses received. We have not been able to include every comment, but have captured the majority of responses in summary form.

Following each section, we have highlighted several initiatives and actions we intend to undertake over the next 1-2 years. Acting on the feedback we have received we hope to continue to improve City Airport.

Our customers

Of our survey responses, 25% were aged under 35, 53% were aged 35-54 and 22% were aged over 55. 93% of respondents were male.

44% of responses were by holders of a PPL, 17% were student pilots. 14% of responses were from visiting pilots and 25% of responses were by public visitors.

Of the responses from pilots, the majority flew Fixed Wing (Group A) - 63%, 23% flew microlights (either flex wing or 3-axis) and 14% flew helicopters.

52% of pilots had logged more than 250 hours flying, 54% of pilots flew more than 20 times a year from City Airport. 79% of students have a lesson more than once a month. 69% of pilots owned an aircraft share at City Airport.

76% of visiting pilots flew in to City Airport for leisure purposes and 72% of these were in Group A Aircraft, whilst 16% were microlights, 8% helicopter and 4% gyrocopter. 96% of visiting pilots said they would return.

Landing Cards

35% of pilots held a Landing Card, with 85% of those intending to renew their cards. Some customers who hold landing cards asked whether it would be possible to pay quarterly or monthly.

We will look at introducing an option to pay for a Landing Card by monthly or quarterly direct debit.

We will introduce email reminders when Landing Cards are due for renewal.

Landing Fees

58% of PPL holders felt that Landing fees were unreasonably priced. However 60% of students felt that Landing fees were reasonable. Students currently pay reduced rate fees charged via Flying Schools. 32% of visiting pilots felt landing fees were reasonable.

Several pilots felt that our Touch and Go charges were reasonable, but that the initial Landing Fee was high for the facilities offered, particularly compared to other airfields.

Some helicopter pilots felt that landing fees for helicopters were disproportionate to fixed winged fees, but noted that helicopters are not charged for circuits.
It was noted that 3-axis microlights that were fitted with a ballistic recovery system were falling above the 450kg price bracket for landing fees, and thus having to pay a higher landing fee.

**Landing Charges for 2012/13 will not be increased for the 4th year running. All comments regarding landing fees are being taken into account when forming our 2012/13 financial budget.**

To accommodate microlights fitted with the ballistic recovery system, we have raised the landing fee bracket from up to 450kg to up to 500kg.

**Aviation Fuelling**

In December 2011 we reduced the selling price of Avgas 100LL fuel by 20p per litre, bringing our price in line with the majority of other airfields.

**We will aim to maintain the current pricing level of Avgas during 2012 and remain competitive with other airfields.**

We will introduce Avgas UL91 to the airfield in the immediate future and this will be priced at a level similar to other airfields.

**Aircraft Maintenance**

We are very aware that the absence of an aircraft maintenance facility is causing difficulties for resident aircraft. We and Peel are committed to attracting a new maintenance organisation during 2012.

**City Airport Ltd is actively seeking a new aviation maintenance organisation to take possession of the former maintenance hangar. Revised attractive lease terms are now available. Enquiries in the first instance should be made to Kay, Nugent, General Manager at City Airport.**

**Aircraft Parking and Hangarage**

37% of Pilots felt that Hangarage and Aircraft parking rates were reasonable. Some pilots were concerned that it was sometimes difficult to get an aircraft out of the hangar in the morning due to others blocking them in. Concern was raised regarding water leaks in Hangar 2.

**Aircraft are often parked down the centre of Hangars as this increases revenue and helps us to avoid price increases for other aircraft in the hangars. However if you wish to make an early start, pilots can contact the Duty Manager the day before and we will then arrange for the path from your aircraft to be clear when required. Pilots can ask at the Control Tower at any time for assistance to move any aircraft, be it your own or someone else's. Assistance is always available and we will do our best to make access as**
If pilots require access to an electric supply within the hangars (e.g. to vacuum aircraft), please contact the Airport Duty Manager, who will arrange this for you.

We have been instructed by the Landlord not to make further repairs to Hangar 2, as there are plans to erect a larger replacement Hangar,. However if there is a leak which is affecting your aircraft, please advise us and we will do our best to fix it or relocate your aircraft where possible.

Runways

91% of pilots marked the clarity of runway markings as 3 or above (out of 5).

72% of pilots marked the suitability of runway surfaces as 3 or above (out of 5)

90% of pilots marked the suitability of runway lengths as 3 or above (out of 5)

A number of pilots noted recent improvements to runway surface conditions, but others were not aware that we have been progressively installing new drainage.

Several pilots noted concern over the bumpiness of the runways and poor taxiway surface particularly in the area of B1.

Several pilots commented that it would be nice to have a hard runway.

During 2012 we will make improvements to the taxiway surface in the area of B1 and B2 holds.

Due to the underlying sub-surface which is constantly adjusting we cannot eliminate the general bumpiness. However, we will carry out further grading works on Runway 27L/27R during 2012.

Discussions have been held with Peel with regard to future longer term development options including provision of re-enforced/hard surface and/or re-aligned runways. Whilst ultimately we (City Airport Ltd), cannot fund such development, we will continue to engage with Peel with regard to supporting these potential options.

We experienced delays during 2011 in re-painting our runway markings, resulting in some deterioration of them during the winter period. We will repaint all markings during 2012.

We will install more new drains to further improve surface water drainage on runways and taxiways.

Customer Service

73% of respondents felt that the level of customer service in the Aircraft Fuelling Service was average or better.

97% of respondents felt that the level of service provided by our Air Traffic Service was average or better.
97% of respondents felt that the level of customer service in the Control Tower Reception was average or better.

93% of respondents felt that the level of customer service received from the Company Admin Department was average or better.

Several suggestions proposed a notice board to advertise aircraft shares should be displayed.

A large number of respondents noted that airport staff were pleasant, very helpful and professional.

Availability of fuel at last landings was requested for those wanting an early departure the following morning.

We have provided a notice board in the Control Tower reception for the advertising of aircraft shares.

Pilots wishing to pick up fuel at or after last landings should make the request in the Control Tower Reception to the Duty Manager. On request, we will provide fuel after last landings as well as prior to airfield opening time if pilots wish to leave early.

We have identified a number of improvements which will be introduced during 2012 to improve our ‘back office’ administrative procedures (E.g. improvements in the procedure for the issue of Landing Cards/fobs etc.)

Briefing Facilities

94% of pilots rated the briefing services provided as 3 or above (out of 5)

We were asked whether we could introduce an ATIS frequency.

Some pilots asked whether an ATIS display could be provided within The Airfield Lodge

Some pilots asked whether an additional pilot briefing room, with PC for internet briefings could be provided.

We were asked whether we could introduce additional webcams to our website.

We will work with the Management of The Airfield Lodge to install an ATIS facility within The Airfield Lodge during 2012.

We will introduce an additional monitor display within the Control Tower reception displaying the latest rainfall radar.

We will improve the quality of our existing webcams and add additional views of the airfield.

We will provide a PC for self-briefings within the Control Tower reception. Currently we do not have space to provide a dedicated briefing room, but when the Terminal building at the Entrance is refurbished we will use the additional space in the Control tower to create such a facility.
We are unable to introduce an ATIS frequency as the CAA will not permit this whilst we provide AFIS. It is only permitted with a full ATC service.

We have now provided Free Wi-Fi in the Control Tower reception.

The Airfield Lodge

71% of visitors have used The Airfield Lodge in the past 4 month.

89% of customers felt the quality of the facility was rated 3 or better (out of 5)

62% of customers felt that the price of drinks was rated 3 or better (out of 5)

59% of customers felt that the price of food was rated 3 or better (out of 5)

68% of customers felt that the customer service in the Lodge was rated 3 or better (out of 5)

22% of customers used the Free Wi-Fi provided. Some concerns were raised that the Wi-Fi was at times unreliable.

Several customers suggested that The Lodge needs to have references to aviation to give it a more welcoming feel.

Several customers felt that the customer service could be improved.

Some customers made particular menu suggestions to better cater for pilots’ needs.

Several customers welcomed the improvements to the facility since refurbishment and welcomed the longer opening hours.

67% of customers would recommend The Airfield Lodge to a friend.

Whilst we (City Airport Ltd), do not manage The Airfield Lodge we have shared the results of the survey with the Lodge management and we are working together to respond to customer comments and suggestions and to provide a more aviation targeted atmosphere and general improvements in customer service.

Some improvements currently being introduced include:

A Pilot Noticeboard is now available in the foyer, introduction of an all day brunch and addition of aviation related decoration.

City Airport Ltd are working with the provider of the Free Wi-Fi at The Airfield Lodge to ensure a reliable service going forward.
How we communicate

86% of respondents feel that we communicate effectively with our customers.

41% of respondents have used our website.

25% of respondents use our Facebook and Twitter

22% of respondents use our Email Subscription Service

Many people commended the level of communication with our customers, including comments that we are amongst the most interactive with our customers of all GA airfields in the UK.

Some customers asked whether we could communicate news and information sooner before things happen on the airfield.

We plan to continue to use our Email Service, Website, Facebook and Twitter to communicate news and information to our customers, increasing use of these where possible.

We will introduce a new website during 2012.

As a general rule all relevant news items are announced as soon as we have the confirmed information to disseminate.

General visitors, public and pilots

25% of visitors felt that their most recent visit to City Airport was about average, whilst 67% of visitors felt that their most recent visit to City Airport was very satisfactory or above.

93% of visitors rated the overall experience of using City Airport as 3 or above (out of 5)

94% of visitors felt that the appearance / tidiness of the airport were average or better.

84% of visitors felt that the quality of the airport facilities was average or better.

97% of visitors felt that the helpfulness of airport staff was average or better.

Several visitors noted that whilst car parking charges reductions were welcome, they should be abolished.

Several visitors noted that the quality of the Control Tower toilets was poor.

A large number of respondents noted that the general helpfulness of airport staff was very good.

A number of aircraft enthusiasts noted that the service provided to them was excellent.

Some suggestions were made to develop social ideas and student visits to our Air Traffic Service.
During late 2011, the airfield management and representatives from Peel visited Sywell Airfield to discuss several initiatives to bring improvements to City Airport. A number of further visits to other airfields are planned during 2012.

A planning application recently submitted by Peel has been approved. This will see the tidying up of the A57 frontage to the airfield, and installation of an entrance sign. Further site improvements are being developed by Peel to improve the overall look of the airfield.

We aim to renovate the Control Tower toilets during 2012 and to improve the quality of these facilities.

We aim to remove all car park charges during 2012.

We aim to attract additional non-aviation income to support our long term goal to reduce aviation costs for flyers.

We aim to improve and widen pathways on the airfield where possible.

We will introduce a number of ‘visit ATC’ days, where students and PPL’s will be invited to a presentation and discussion with our FISO staff as well as a detailed visit to our Air Traffic Service.

We will introduce a number of Airfield Tour days, targeted at the general public and aviation enthusiasts.

We will look to introduce additional events and social activities that will help to stimulate an active social atmosphere at the airfield.

Summary

We have tried to progress a number of the customer suggestions in the details above and in addition to those listed there are many more initiatives that we are reviewing and / or planning to introduce during 2012 and beyond.

We appreciate all the support that we receive from all our customers and whilst we still have a lot to achieve, we will continue to work to improve all the facilities and services on offer at City Airport. Only with the positive support of all the aviation community can we hope to keep these improvements moving forward for the benefit of all our customers.

Please continue to support us during 2012 and thank you for taking part in the survey.

Kay Nugent  
General Manager  
City Airport & Heliport

Nick Duriez  
Operations Manager  
City Airport & Heliport