

CONSULTATION ON SMOKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

RESPONSE OF BAA SCOTLAND

1 Introduction:

This paper provides the response of BAA Scotland to the Scottish Executive's consultation on Smoking in Public Places. In it, BAA Scotland recognises the growing public debate on passive smoking, explains how it has sought to deal with the issue in its airports and commits to implementing any changes in the law aimed at reducing passive smoking.

2 Background:

- 2.1 BAA Scotland owns and operates the country's three principal airports at Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow which, together, handle nearly 19 million passengers a year. The company is committed to providing a first class experience for all airport users through continuous investment in facilities. Over the last ten years, £500 million has been invested in our Scottish airports at no expense to the taxpayer and BAA has pledged to invest another £500 million over the next decade.
- 2.2 Our ability to provide "clean, working and friendly" airports is one of the main criteria on which all our stakeholders will ultimately judge us. To this end, we recognise that that our facilities must be of a standard and quality that meets the needs and demands of all who use them - airlines, staff and travellers alike.
- 2.3 We also recognise that, with an increasing number of direct international flights being attracted to Scotland through BAA's £95 million Route Development Fund, more and more overseas visitors to Scotland will be gaining their first impressions of our country at one of our airports. We are anxious that they gain the most favourable of first impressions and so we support the Scottish Executive's recent initiative in sending Cllr Eric Milligan on a fact-finding mission in this respect.
- 2.4 The comfort and convenience of all those who use our airports is fundamental to our business and is at the forefront of our daily thinking.

3 The issue in airports:

- 3.1 The issue of smoking, and the provision of smoking areas in airports, is one with which the company has wrestled for many years. When accounting for the numbers of people exposed to "second-hand smoke" at Scotland's three major airports, the issue is not simply one for the 18.8 million passengers a year who pass through them. For these passengers also generate a number of other users, more commonly described as "meeters and greeters", numbering an estimated 5.6 million additional airport users. In addition, over 12,000 people are directly employed in the area of the airport and the quality of their working environment should also be considered.

4 Passenger opinion:

- 4.1 For many years, BAA has conducted continuous monitoring of the views of both arriving and departing passengers about the quality of service it provides in a number of important areas. This Quality of Service Monitoring (QSM) is conducted at all of BAA's airports and around 62,000 passengers a year are surveyed around the UK locations. The primary function is to enable airport management to track performance and make better quality decisions.
- 4.2 Consistently, the QSM figures for smoking have been amongst the lowest over the range of issues surveyed. The score for satisfaction with the smoking arrangements amongst smokers and non-smokers alike have been below desired levels over the past five years. In addition, smoking complaints registered through in-airport feedback boxes together with ad hoc complaints have remained at a relatively high level.

5 Allowing choice:

- 5.1 In recognition of the level of complaint over smoking arrangements at all three airports an initiative aimed at allowing customer choice was launched with the installation of Tornex ventilated smoking units in terminal areas. Simply described, these are designated areas of the airport which are enclosed by powerful ventilation systems to extract smoke thereby leaving a more pleasant, smoke-free atmosphere both in the unit and, for non-smokers, outside it.
- 5.2 This exercise, which commenced in April 2003, has led to installation, to date, of eight units; four at Edinburgh Airport, three at Glasgow Airport and one at Aberdeen Airport, costing a total of some £650,000.

In addition, annual maintenance costs are in the region of £90,000. Also, in total, some 170 square metres of terminal floor space is taken up by these units and further areas have been identified for more.

6 Changing opinion:

- 6.1 While the installation of this equipment has undoubtedly begun to solve the technical problems of smoke distribution in the terminal areas in which the units have been situated, it is clear from both monitored and ad hoc observation and comment, that they are not the total answer to the perception issues raised by smoking in public places.

- 6.2 At Glasgow Airport, the number of smoking related complaints has remained largely the same. At Edinburgh there is no pre and post-Tornex comparison due to a change in the method of monitoring complaints but anecdotal evidence suggests only a small reduction in the number of complaints while at Aberdeen Airport, the number of complaints has risen.

- 6.3 Neither has the Quality of Service Monitoring shown the hoped-for improvement commensurate with the efforts to alleviate the problem or the size of the investment. In general there has been a slight increase in satisfaction amongst smokers with the new arrangements. However, these have been less than enthusiastically endorsed by non-smokers who, although appearing to acknowledge the efforts made to allow smoking choice by the installation of the units, have, in the main, not altered their opinion on the arrangements. As result, the QSM scores have shown no real improvement and remain lagging behind other surveyed areas of customer service, by some margin.

7 Staff smoking:

- 7.1 Arrangements for staff smoking vary across airports and between the variety of companies and organisations that populate them. However, staff are not permitted to smoke in any of the Tornex dedicated areas at any airport. At Glasgow and Aberdeen Airports, staff are forbidden to smoke while on duty in any part of the airport. At Edinburgh, a system whereby BAA staff are permitted to smoke in a dedicated cabin in a service yard, is under review. Other companies can set their own smoking arrangements in place within their leased accommodation. At none of our airports are staff of any organisation allowed to smoke in public areas.

8 Response to Consultation:

- 8.1 It can be seen from this submission that BAA has gone to considerable lengths and expense to monitor the views of its airport users and to take positive steps to accommodate their views on the issue of smoking in our airports.
- 8.2 It remains our desire to find a balanced solution between the wishes of those who smoke and those who do not. However, BAA Scotland recognises the health issues which are the impetus for this consultation and will commit to vigorously supporting any change in the law on smoking in public places.
- 8.3 Accordingly, our responses to the questions asked in the consultation form are as follows;

Question 1: Having considered the health risks associated with passive smoking, do you think that further action needs to be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?

Having considered the health risks, BAA Scotland agrees that further action should be taken to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke. In this respect, BAA Scotland has invested considerable energy and resource into finding a suitable solution that also recognises personal choice.

Question 2: Would you support a law that would make enclosed public places smoke-free?

If such a law was to be passed in Scotland, BAA Scotland would fully support and vigorously implement it in its airports, both in public areas and in its workplaces.

Question 3: If a law was introduced, do you think there should be any exemptions to it? (i.e. any enclosed public places where smoking should be allowed.)

BAA Scotland has taken measures at all its airports to delineate and enclose areas of its terminals where members of the public are allowed to smoke. To date, these have only marginally affected the number of complaints received about passive smoking. It is our view that exemptions are not the answer and would weaken the effectiveness of any law. BAA Scotland believes that, if a law was passed, there should be no exemptions to it.

Question 4: If we decide not to introduce a law, what more could be done to encourage individual businesses to take voluntary action to become smoke-free or to inhibit more smoke-free provision?

From its experience of trying to provide more smoke-free areas in its terminals, BAA Scotland believes that voluntary action by businesses would not be an effective solution to the problems of passive smoking which the Executive is attempting to address. Businesses are likely to find, as BAA has done, that this a costly and space-consuming exercise which, in the end, does not meet with the approval of those who are against passive smoking.

Question 5: What else could be done to reduce people's exposure to second-hand smoke?

While recognising that there is no easy solution to the problem of passive smoking, BAA Scotland will continue to seek ways of addressing the concerns of its customers and its staff about this issue should the law not be changed. Only by doing so can we commit to providing a first class airport experience for all users.

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