

# newsletter

## february 2010

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**NEC Elections – Reporting Lines – Open Meeting  
PC Contingency – EFD – WP – TU Issues Register  
R Long - Conference 2009 Report**

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Thank you for taking the time to read the newsletter. As you can see by the logo on the right hand side, there are now two ATCO subsections at Prestwick Centre. Plans to merge the two sub-sections got a little confused with a different “presidential” debate at conference 2009 and the vote was lost. We hope this will be resolved at conference next year! Also, don't forget to regularly check for updates on [www.atcos.co.uk](http://www.atcos.co.uk)

### **Prospect NEC Elections**

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It's that time of year again, when you will be receiving voting forms for Prospect National Executive Committee. These voting forms will be issued from the 17th March 2010 and need to be returned by 28th April 2010. You can vote for more than one person and full details will be included with the paper. **Please use your vote, as having people on the NEC is a great benefit to your branch.** Prospect currently has two branches active within NATS, Prospect ATCO's branch and Air Traffic System Specialists (ATSS). Ask your local reps if you need any further information.

### **PC Reporting Lines**

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With the move into PC and a few watch changes, people should have already received a letter from unit management detailing their new reporting lines (line manager). If you have not received this letter, please contact your operational supervisor or manager in the first instance.

### **Prospect Open Meeting**

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We are planning an open meeting for Prospect ATCO members at PC. This will give everyone a chance to meet all the new reps from ScOACC & MACC and ask some questions. You can let us know what you're thinking and we can provide an update on some central Prospect issues (Pay and Pension). This will be a local meeting at PC and we'll advertise the dates and venue once confirmed.

### **PC Contingency: ATCO staffing of fall-back facility**

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NATS presented brief information about the PC fall-back facility during OCT. Now we are resident in the PC ops room the fall-back is located a considerable distance from Prestwick. In the event of a disruption of ATC services from the PC ops room, NATS have the option to declare a fall-back situation. This means that NATS have, from that point, 48 hours to start a reduced service from the contingency facility.

If this situation was to occur at a local level, management will form a command team; senior local TU reps have been invited to be part of this team. Whilst this invite to the TU is very welcome, it opens up many questions about the reality of around 300 ATCOs (plus ATSAs, Engineers and Managers) being displaced on a temporary basis. I am prepared to be corrected, but I believe if this was to happen it would be unprecedented in civil UK ATC history.

Obviously such a situation would have meant that something serious would have occurred at PC. However, the disruption that would also be additionally demanded of Prospect ATCO members, would also need to be addressed by NATS & Prospect.

NATS have made detailed logistical plans for travel by plane/train/automobile to the facility and for accommodation there, so that Prospect ATCO's can be available to work at the fall-back facility. This would mean as little as 24hrs notice for some members in order to meet 48hr resumption of ops.

We have raised this issue centrally within Prospect. While it may be impractical to plan for an unknown/unpredictable occurrence, given the detailed logistical plans that have been made so far, we don't think pre-planning temporary displacement should be too difficult or unreasonable.

## **EFD**

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Two briefings have been given to Prospect, however it was pointed out that a MACC rep is not always included in NATS invites. Work carried out so far seems very thorough and detailed. Further TU briefing 18<sup>th</sup> February.

## **WP**

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Airways – as we all know we need a review of WP – a joint NATS/TU WP workshop was held on 25<sup>th</sup> January. 2<sup>nd</sup> workshop is planned for the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March.

There are many outstanding issues for OSs and DOSs, which are under discussion with management.

NATS desire a PC WP agreement. However, realistically any changes to current Airways WP will be to get it to a state where it is up to date and reflects current circumstances. It is likely that once we have reached this state, WP will be seasonally reviewed.

## **PC TU Issues Register**

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We are updating the TU Issues Register with Dave Brash (the OM with IR responsibility), and the document will be posted to NATS 'livelink'. This document keeps track of all issues registered with NATS management and are the things we are officially working on. It's not the whole story as some things crop up and are resolved before they make it to the register. I'm hoping that it will be technically possible to have this document open to view by all members on NATSnet.

## **R Long**

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A Prospect team has been briefed on the Training for R Long separation, including the options to start at 9.30am for a simulator start of 11.30am, or alternatively an 11.30am start for 1.30pm. In response to the members' feedback, management have agreed to the 11.30am start to be compliant to SCRATCOH. The next testing days will involve a couple of new staff members, though the section agreed that more new faces would be needed to get objective feedback from people not linked to the project.

## **Finally..**

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Minutes from our monthly section meetings (1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the Month) are available from Nigel Robinson until we roll out the new Prospect information file, as both of the Atlantic House versions have disappeared! We are also finding space for a new bulletin board.

A flavour of some of our many meetings occurring this month:

- Weekly Unit Mangers' meeting open to Prospect 9<sup>th</sup> February - Jo Forman, 23<sup>rd</sup> February - Paul Wharton.
- Design Equipment Review Group (DERG) 10<sup>th</sup> February - Tal Herbert
- EFD 18<sup>th</sup> February - Richard Thomas
- PC Relationships meeting February 22<sup>nd</sup>
- Command team meeting - Paul Wharton/Mark Levington

Both sections are short of representatives to deal effectively with our increasing workload. If you feel you could spare some time to shape your future, then please speak to your Watch or Unit reps.

## Conference 2009 report from Scottish delegates

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Delegates: Mark Levington, Nigel McCullough, Mark Rooke and Paul Wharton.  
BEC (from Scottish): Dave Carty, Malcolm Macpherson & Richard Thomas.

Although this year's list of motions looked a bit thin, it turned out to be a fully packed agenda with timescales pushed to the limits to ensure all conference business was completed in the allocated time. The larger issues to be discussed this year were re-organising of the ATCO Branch structure and the future involvement in Working Together. As usual Pay and Banding were discussed but more on that later....

### Late flight due fog

We kicked off with a Northern section meeting in advance of the main Conference but unfortunately due to the late departure of our flight we missed the start of the meeting. However we arrived in time to discuss the new structure and the establishment of the Prestwick Centre Section. This also involved establishing a fully integrated Airports section representing all NATS Airports (and Non-ops) under one section. The Northern Airfield guys seemed happy about this and everyone on the Northern section was in agreement!

### Chair or President?

Onto the main Conference and after formalities we got on to Names & Structure. The first Rule change was that of changing the name of Chair of ATCO Branch to President of ATCO Branch. There was a long debate and in the end this was lost and the name remains the same!

### Area & Airports or North & South?

The current Prospect structure doesn't truly reflect how some ATCOs at the centres are actually represented, with a total of 366 Prospect ScOACC and MACC ATCOs brought together under one roof in PC, this was an opportunity to change that.

Unfortunately, the proposed changes didn't satisfy the needs of the airfield reps. The proposal of changes had been available since January 2009. For a Rule change to succeed a two thirds majority of 1265 card votes are required. A majority of 1174 votes were achieved for this change but this was 91 votes short of those required for the change to be ratified. This is the second year that this change has failed and hopefully this administrative bit of housekeeping will be successful third time around. The Saturday morning saw a long and unscheduled debate about Conference "changing its mind" on structure, after an out of session debate. On the Friday night in the bar some delegates felt that maybe the wrong decision had been made. Fortunately common sense and democracy ruled and we didn't re-vote on Saturday.

But in the meantime PC ATCOs are officially represented by ScOACC and MACC reps, on the plus side next year we can send 6 delegates to conference. In the future, once the rule change comes in we will probably be reduced to 4 delegates.

### AAVA's

A few motions were in about changes to the AAVA agreement & all were lost. With all agreeing that current policy **not to re-negotiate the AAVA agreement** it is sound policy and it did not need any changes. There's about 18 – 20 months left on the AAVA agreement.

### LCE payments

With the ever increasing workload on LCE's (UCE's) the BEC will be looking at LCE payments in the next pay round. Some airfield reps commented on a lack of volunteers available to take up the role. This will put real pressure on the scheme and on NATS.

### "Safe, efficient and orderly flow of air traffic"

Our Swanwick TC colleagues had put in a motion to debate lobbying for a change to documentation that read ...*"a change to MATS pt1 to read "safe, but only if cost effective, flow of air transport in the UK" to reflect the organisations (NATS) changing priorities."*

TC delegates wanted to withdraw motion, but at the last minute the rest of the delegates chose to keep it in to discuss. The airfield reps seemed to feel that this motion wasn't as "funny" as everyone thought and expressed some worrying feelings about the meaning behind its message. Many a true word is said in jest.

However this motion was lost as it would not be consistent with Prospect Policy.

**continued..**

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### **Work Together or a parting of ways?**

Saturday afternoon saw some long presentations on WT. The pro's of WT came from NATS Managers (including Pauline Lamb), NTUS reps and the ATCO BEC, whilst the con's came from the floor, with several reps from differing units telling of their experiences in Working Together.

Generally everyone (including senior NATS Managers) seemed to agree that WT seemed to work better between Central/National Reps and Senior Managers but at a local level between Local reps and Middle managers there may be a problem.

NATS have proposed better training for Managers and Reps. The training programme is rolling out in December with Key Performance Indicators for Managers with IR responsibilities.

The KPI is a massive give by NATS and makes it really worthwhile sticking with WT which Conference voted in favour of doing, with a caveat to review the situation by August 2010 in time for next years Conference. The KPI means that there will be full transparency up to Board level on how Industrial Relations are progressing at local levels. Locally each unit will determine how to arrive at red/amber/greens for the KPI.

### **LAS's, GS's and Network Managers**

A couple of motions were passed in relation to these roles. These were;

The BEC to lobby the CAA/SRG to make these roles licensed,

Ensure that NATS doesn't rely upon substitution to fulfil these roles by ensuring sufficient substantive jobs are made available,

remind and petition NATS to retain ATCO experience in these roles and keep ATCO experience in non ops environment of ATM.

ATM is an important part of air traffic control and it's important that the role of the ATCO is and remains, embedded in ATM.

### **To delete or not to delete that is the question..**

For those that have read the Branch Handbook you'll see some policy that is outdated or redundant due to changes in other things. There was an attempt to delete or amend much of this policy. Looks simple but in fact took a lot of time to work through as some of this policy is mixed in with aspirational policy. While not attainable at this time why would we want to remove it, read the handbook you'll see what I mean.

### **Pay, Structure and Banding**

As usual this area of debate drew its normal divisions. Everyone recognises that how we arrived at the current Banding system was probably flawed but no one can agree on how we address it now and in the future. The widening divisions between bands will only get progressively worse. The JUGAC (don't ask me what it stands for) who were commissioned to look at banding some years ago are in turmoil, with an interim report last year that didn't clear anything up. A final report is about to be released....

On a positive note the BEC has been instructed to review the ATCO supervisory pay structure across NATS. This has been catalysed by the PC Operational Supervisor role.

### **Same again next year?**

The new Handbook from the Standing Orders Committee will be out in the near future and will have the full details of new policies passed at conference. As always speak with the reps for the latest.

If you find yourself saying "the union don't do anything for me" - **the membership is the union** - so get involved. The union isn't a mysterious group of anonymous people, they are your colleagues that sit beside you. All they've done is come along to the section meetings, expressed an opinion and then done something about it. Costa Coffee won't change anything for us!

Scottish Delegates.