



**Social and cultural capital
information sheet**

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Produced in 2017 as part of the SPARA 2020 Project

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Information sources

A large majority of the information compiled in this sheet comes from the research conducted by Bloice, Baxter and Gray (2017) at remote airports for the SPARA project. Some additional elements have been included based on conversations between SPARA project members, and in a few cases from the wider literature on remote airports and access to remote communities: for this last category the source is cited and included in the reference list.

Airport types

Bloice, Baxter and Gray (2017) describe four functions of airports:

- Gateway – a functional point of travel in and out of the local area
- Venue – where the airport may be seen as a social space and venue in its own right (e.g. use of café by non-passengers)
- Business – the airport helps to attract and retain businesses in the local area and provides services to business users
- Community – the airport is an integral part of local identity, and may provide lifeline services to the area

Most airports will offer two or more of these functions, and by plotting the key aspects of an airport against two axes, one with Gateway and Community at the extremes and the other with Venue and Business, four dominant airport types can be defined, of which three are of relevance to the SPARA 2020 project:

- Business gateway (e.g. Sundsvall)
- Community/lifeline gateway (e.g. Kirkwall, Benbecula)
- Community arena/venue (e.g. Donegal)



Employment

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Important community employer	Positive	All	Both direct and indirect employment opportunities, and in remote areas there may be limited alternative options
Long term employment	Positive	All	Common for employees to have been at the airport for 20 – 30 years, and in some cases over 40 years
Intergenerational employment	Positive	All	Fosters a strong emotional attachment to the airport
Airport as an enabler of businesses	Positive	All	If a business is able to operate because of the presence of an airport then that provides additional employment prospects to residents
Flying offers reduced journey times compared to alternative means of travel	Positive	All (particularly noted for Scottish Route Development Fund journeys)	Smyth et al. (2012, p. 58)
<p>In addition to the ability of an airport to offer or enable the employment opportunities described there is also the intangible benefit of allowing people living in a remote area to stay there rather than having to move away to find work, as well as attracting new residents to areas that may have suffered significant depopulation in the past, making them more viable communities to live in.</p>			

Local history

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Reminiscence and memory of previous versions of the airport	Positive and negative	All	Fondness for the simplicity of airports in their pre-development early periods, but dislike of the lack of facilities
Freedom from security restrictions	Positive	All	Greater ability to use the airport as a childhood playground when there were few limits on access to all parts of the airfield, including airside
Flying as a life event	Positive	All	Recollection of a flight as an exciting experience rather than the (almost) everyday occurrence it is now
<p>It should be noted that for the above each influence could be regarded as having the opposite impact when considering the modern airport compared to the older versions</p>			
Airport name	Positive	All	Many airports are referred to locally by their original names, maintaining a link to their past (e.g. Kirkwall is known as Grimsetter)
Reflection of local heritage in airport design	Positive	Potentially all, although dependent on how the design is chosen	Use of memorabilia in the terminal and external representations of historical context (e.g. installation of runic text "krimsitir" above the entrance to Kirkwall (Grimsetter) airport)

Identity

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Pride in the airport as an integral part of local identity	Positive	All, but possibly greater in Community/ Lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	People view the airport as an essential part of the community and they have a sense of ownership
Airport identifies where it is to new arrivals	Positive	All	Many (usually large airports) could be anywhere in the world, whereas these airports say to travellers "you have arrived in Orkney or Donegal (or wherever they are)"
Airport artwork representing the local area	Positive	All	For example, paintings at Benbecula and a large sculpture at Sundsvall
New airport design to reflect the local area	Positive	All	Particularly referred to in connection with plans for a new Skye airport to be "unmistakably Skye"
Airport as gateway to the region	Positive	All	Showcasing the wider region at the airport – often done in conjunction with tourism promoters
Promotion of local attractions and products	Positive (although care should be taken to avoid an off-putting "hard sell")	All	Advertising and sales by businesses wishing to promote tourist attractions and products associated with the region (for example, whisky in Scottish airports)

Make the airport different

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Larger airports seem very similar to each other	Negative	Most likely to be the case with Business Gateway airports	Noted at Sundsvall that travellers tend to spend as little time as possible at the airport, they are there simply as a means to get somewhere else
Smaller airports are more likely to be noticeably different	Positive	Community/ lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	Comments collected from users of these types of airport (at Kirkwall, Donegal and Benbecula) were very positive about the benefits of small size, such as being able to see all of the airport functions at once
Large windows providing natural light throughout the terminal and offering panoramic views of the airfield	Positive	Easier to achieve in Community/ lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	Because arriving passengers at these airports are very likely to disembark using steps the windows provide an opportunity for waiting relatives and friends to see and greet passengers from inside the terminal
Close relationship between staff and airport users, particularly those who travel regularly	Positive	Community/ lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	Staff at the smallest airports (e.g. Donegal) and those where air travel is used almost in the way that a bus service would be used elsewhere (e.g. Kirkwall inter island travel) know their users very well
Close ties between staff at smaller airports, where members of staff all know each other	Positive	Community/ lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	Enhanced by family members working at the same airport and by the length of time some staff have been employed
Expansion and contracting out of services reduces the relationships between staff members	Negative	Could happen to all types, although most likely at Business gateway airports	Noted as an issue at Kirkwall, where for example the Christmas party no longer takes place at the airport since moving to 7 day operation

Serendipitous social function of the airport

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Recognition of other business travellers, with the possibility of an impromptu meeting taking place	Positive	Most likely to be the case with Business Gateway airports, although could happen at the others	Commented on at Sundsvall, although only one example of a meeting taking place was noted
Unexpected encounter with friends and relatives using the airport	Positive	Community/ lifeline gateway and Community arena/ venue airports	While the people encountered may be unexpected, some users of these airports have a high expectation of running into somebody that they know almost every time they are there
May be an unwanted encounter	Negative	All	An example is somebody travelling for business who wishes to work while waiting to depart but is interrupted by acquaintances

Lifeline services

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Medical and emergency services where no timely viable alternative to air travel is possible	Positive	All, although particularly so for island airports where local facilities are basic	Air travel allows ill patients requiring treatment not available locally to spend less time travelling and receive their treatment more promptly
Air travel allows ill patients requiring treatment not available locally to spend less time travelling and receive their treatment more promptly	Positive	All, although the air link is more important for locations without easy alternatives (particularly islands)	One specific reason given was to allow travel to important life events such as funerals and weddings
Allow participation in events, and life generally, beyond the local area	Positive	All	Travel for work and education, helping to prevent population loss from remote areas
Maintenance of businesses and employment opportunities	Positive	All	Without access to an airport some businesses may decide to relocate to areas with better communications
Offers an alternative means of access to the area for tourists	Positive	All	Some tourists may decide not to come to the area if travel by other means is lengthy and difficult – particularly those who are cash rich but time poor
Easy access for tourists is not necessarily a good thing	Negative	All	Particularly mentioned for Skye, where tourist facilities are already stretched, and could be made worse should a new airport be opened
Shopping for items that are not available locally and where cost of flights is competitive with alternative travel options or delivery charges	Positive	All	Craig (2011, p. 69), Newkirk and Casavant (2002, p. 66).
Improved safety outcomes by replacing road journeys (less safe) with flights (more safe)	Positive	All	Moogan (2007)

Social and cultural use of airport facilities

Social and cultural influences	Impact type	Airport type	Additional comments
Travel to the airport specifically to use café or restaurant facilities	Positive	All	Attracts people who like to watch aircraft, nearby workers at lunchtime, groups enjoying an outing (e.g. carers taking special needs clients at Kirkwall), teenagers who want somewhere to 'hang out' and use wifi
Airport location unsuitable for casual café use	Neutral (or negative if café hopes to rely on the income from casual use)	All	If the airport is not easy to get to then people may not make the journey just to use the café – however, some people felt this might be the case at Kirkwall but the evidence is that the café is indeed used that way
Use airport spaces (café and main terminal) for events after usual closing time	Positive (although staff availability and costs would need to be considered)	All where there are no late evening flights	Example events suggested include award ceremonies and charity fundraisers
Provision of meeting spaces	Positive	All, but most likely at Business gateway airports that may have available space	Sundsvall has an area specifically designed for meeting use, and other airports have less purposeful spaces that can be used (although lack of staff knowledge of the availability of these spaces may restrict their use)
Recreational use of outdoor space	Positive	All, although Business gateway airports may be too busy to allow such use	Events such as fun runs, skydives, air shows and music festivals, although tightened airside access may mean some of these are less likely to happen than they may have in the past
Use of car park at light parking times	Positive	All	Car boot sales, farmers' markets, etc.
Events and exhibitions inside the terminal	Positive	All	Static exhibitions, such as artworks, history displays and using idle airport screens to show archive footage, are probably easier to organise than performances, although who should be responsible for organising any such event (airport staff? local groups? commercial organisations?) is a common issue
School visits and work experience opportunities	Positive	All	Airports are able to engage with the younger members of their communities by organising visits, and by offering work experience they can promote future careers within the airport and aviation industries

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