

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 6 March 2001

Subject: **The Future of Aviation – Consultation Response**

Report of: Director of Planning and Transport and Head of Regional Transport
Planning

Recommendations:

That the views set out in Annex I are submitted as the Regional Assembly's response to the consultation document "The Future of Aviation", and the Department are invited to hold a national seminar for Regional Bodies, at which the consultant's report can be discussed.

I Background

- 1.1 In the Integrated Transport White Paper "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone" (published July 1998) the Government announced that it would prepare a UK airports policy looking 30 years ahead and would bring forward new policies on civil aviation. The Government intends to bring these together in an air transport White Paper that will provide a policy framework for the future of aviation and airports in the UK.
- 1.2 The Government has announced that it wishes to consult widely in producing the White Paper. As part of that process it published a consultation document in December 2000 entitled "The Future of Aviation". This document highlights the main issues on which the Government will need to take decisions in preparing the White Paper.
- 1.3 In addition, within the South East region there will be a period of public consultation following the publication of the output from the South East and East of England Regional Air Service Study (SERAS). The Regional Assembly is represented on the wider reference group for this study, which it is anticipated will report in Summer 2001.

- 1.4 The closing date for responses to the current consultation document is 12 April 2001.

2 Consultation Response

- 2.1 Air Transport is of major economic, social and environmental significance to the region, and that significance has steadily grown over the last 50 years. Changes to national policy, for example in respect of regional airports, could therefore have important implications for a wide range of planning and transport issues in the South East.
- 2.2 The consultation document includes a series of questions on which the views of consultees are invited. Annex I to this report sets out proposed response of the Committee on behalf of the Regional Assembly on the questions which fall within its locus and competence

3 Next Steps

- 3.1 The responses will then inform the work of the Assembly's advisory planning and transport groups. It is also suggested the DETR should hold a seminar for regional bodies to discuss the results of the consultation.

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26 February 2001

The Future Of Aviation

The Government's consultation document on air transport policy

Response of the South East England Regional Assembly
March 2001

Main Questions

- a) Should the Government choose policies that respond to the demand of consumers and allow current growth patterns to continue, while mitigating the negative effects as far as possible? Or are the costs of this approach too high and should we therefore choose policies to limit these negative effects?

Even with the most successful scenario of dispersal to regional airports, demand in the south east region will continue to rise substantially. Unless carefully planned and managed this rise will lead to severe environmental and social impacts on parts of the region. As with surface traffic, there may be a case for some demand management but this can only be effective if coordinated on a pan- European or even wider basis.

- b) How should the Government ensure that aviation meets the external environmental costs for which it is responsible? Should greater emphasis be placed on regulation (at a global, national or local level), economic instruments or voluntary agreements? If we should use a mix of approaches, what are the principles that should underlie the choice of approach for each issue?

Aviation should meet its external costs to a greater extent than is currently the case, however this will again require action at an international level. The United Kingdom could usefully lobby for this issue to be considered as a matter of priority. In identifying the most appropriate approach it will be important that impacts and costs of any proposals are properly identified in order to ensure that there are no significant or adverse market distortions.

- c) If aviation covers its environmental costs, should capacity then be provided to meet demand?

As aviation is some way from achieving this goal, or demonstrating that it can achieve this goal, the question is premature.

- d) Should the United Kingdom try to maintain its position as a major hub for international connecting traffic, or focus on enabling travel to, from and within the United Kingdom? Is there a role for Government in promoting either

objective (given that airlines will pursue the most commercially attractive option)?

The United Kingdom should try and maintain its current position as a major hub for international traffic as well as enabling travel to, from and within the United Kingdom. The Government does have a role to play in promoting both roles.

- e) Within the existing capacity constraints, how can the interests of United Kingdom consumers be best advanced?

There should be maximum competition within a framework of constraints that reflects the need to balance social, economic and environmental impacts arising from air travel. In a situation where demand exceeds supply it is possible for passenger standards to fall. Consideration could be given to the identification of incentives that would encourage the aviation industry to invest in improving passenger standards.

Consumer Issues

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issues raised in these questions.

Economic Effects

- a) Is there any evidence of negative economic effects associated with the development and operation of airports?

Although the overall economic impacts of airports are undoubtedly beneficial, particular localities may suffer from severe environmental impacts which can discourage investment and create social problems.

- b) Do you agree that good air transport links to and from regional airports encourage regional economic growth? What might be done to promote them?

Air transport links from regional airports do encourage economic growth. They can be promoted by investment in surface access and ground facilities. For some regional airports however access to international destinations is likely to be continue to be practical only via the existing international hub airports. Access to these hub airports will continue to be a key issue, with the need to consider a multi modal approach to access the likely way forward.

- c) Should we encourage maintenance operations to shift to regional airports?

Care would need to be exercised in promoting a shift in maintenance operations to ensure that this would not result in negative impact on the local environment or economy. In addition care would need to be exercised in order to avoid reducing the economies of scale that airlines might benefit from at hub airports, weakening the latter's competitiveness internationally.

Environmental Effects

- a) To what extent should the Government rely on regulation to influence noise, emissions and other environmental effects of aviation, and to what extent are economic instruments or voluntary agreements more appropriate?

Regulation can be a blunt instrument but nevertheless there should be a framework of regulation and fiscal standards to provide a base line and a stimulus for voluntary agreements that can flexibly take account of local factors.

- b) To what extent should there be a national framework for the assessment and mitigation of noise and local environmental effects at airports and to what extent should the details be defined locally? For example, should limits for aircraft noise and/or emissions be set around airports (where they do not already exist)?

Wherever possible details of any agreement should be determined locally within an agreed national framework. Local agreements should also take account of the need to influence and advise priorities for investment that are consistent with the national policy framework.

- c) If economic instruments were used to reflect the polluter pays principle, should such instruments be varied in relation to the sensitivity of location or operating time (for example for night flights)?

Yes -economic instruments have the opportunity to be varied in support of wider policy objectives, although once again account should be taken of the need to ensure that local factors are also taken into consideration.

- d) Is a balance between mitigation and compensation the best approach for local impacts? Are there further steps the Government could take to mitigate the environmental effects of aviation?

Emphasis should be given to mitigating local impacts, as opposed to providing compensation. The Government could encourage further improvements to the mitigation of local impacts, but this may need to be undertaken within the wider European context.

- e) In the long term, where should the United Kingdom concentrate its efforts in international negotiations on environmental impacts?

A key area to concentrate on is to ensure that the aviation industry pays comparable fuel costs to surface access, not only to recoup an approach to “the polluter pays” principle, but also to ensure fair competition between short haul aviation and surface travel. In addition, efforts should be concentrated on reducing the impact of night flights and emissions.

- f) What more could be done to encourage further development of future technologies in this field?

Initiating Government funded research into improvements that are both environmentally beneficial and increase the efficiency of the aviation industry could encourage the development of appropriate technologies.

Airport Capacity

- a) Would it be desirable to implement new policies in order to make best use of airport capacity? If so what policies should be implemented?

It would be desirable to apply the underlying principle of maximising the use of existing infrastructure (as set out in the Integrated Transport White Paper) to airport capacity. This may encourage better use to be made of existing capacity at regional airports and might encourage consideration to be given to segregating certain types of air movement and focussing them on particular locations.

- b) Should the slot allocation regime be adjusted to take environmental considerations into account?

The major environmental impact associated with aviation arises from the type of aircraft used, however there could be merit in considering how the slot allocation regime might support other policies that seek to reduce the environmental impact.

- c) What are the arguments for and against raising the cost of using airports where demand exceeds capacity?

There are strong arguments in favour of such an approach, however caution would need to be exercised in its application. In particular it would be important that such an approach was part of a coherent overall U.K. strategy and did not undermine competitiveness in the wider European and International context.

- d) How can future technologies to reduce capacity constraints at existing airports best be used? How can the Government and the aviation industry encourage the development of such technologies?

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issue raised in this question.

Airport Competition and Ownership

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issues raised in this question.

Airport Planning

- a) Do you consider that the guidance in PPG24 on noise sensitive development near airports is easy to understand and interpret? Has the guidance achieved its objectives?

The guidance provided by PPG24 cannot be readily or easily interpreted by the aviation industry. Revised advice is essential in order that this key environmental concern might be addressed more easily.

- b) Could the concept of environmental capacity limits be applied successfully to United Kingdom airports? How would limits be set? Would these be alongside or instead of limits on passenger throughput?

It is doubtful whether environmental capacity limits would be appropriate or helpful at a national level, but there may be scope for developing such limits at a local level as an adjunct to passenger limits.

- c) Would it be useful to update and reissue the guidance on the operation of airport consultative committees? Would it be desirable to include representation of regional interests on committees at larger airports?

In overall terms Airport consultative committees function well at present but some revision to the guidance may be beneficial. It would certainly be desirable to include regional interests such as the Regional Assembly in the Committees.

- d) Should the Government encourage a system of voluntary environmental agreements between airports, airport users, and local interests, which could provide an agreed framework for development and complement the statutory role of the planning system?

The Government should encourage voluntary environmental agreements wherever possible and practicable.

- e) How should people best be compensated for the environmental impact of airports on their local area? Should the Government encourage greater use of voluntary agreements to compensate for, or mitigate the effects of, significant airport development?

Emphasis should in the first instance be given to mitigation of the environmental impacts of airports on the local area. Within the limits available, compensation can be a useful way of offsetting the impact of airports, although it should not be used to encourage operators to continue to operate in an environmentally inefficient manner.

Integrated Transport

- a) Is there anything further that the Government or the aviation industry can do to encourage increased public transport use to access airports, and to encourage greater use of airports as inter-modal hubs connecting different forms of transport?

There is a need to look at the whole process of journey planning and to develop measures that address some of the obstacles to passengers choosing public transport as a mode of travel. It is also essential that the SRA give greater national investment priority to rail access to airports as it is unlikely that the necessary levels of investment will be forthcoming through either track access or station access charges. The development of accessibility standards, supported by targets, for airports and their associated rail, coach and bus stations would provide a focus for identifying future investment requirements and ensuring better integration.

- b) Should surface access connections to airports be regarded as essential components of airport development and approval for any new capacity be made conditional on appropriate connections being provided?

Such binding conditions should certainly be considered an essential part of any significant future airport development.

- c) What are the best mechanisms for bringing together the various interested agencies in order to establish the best surface access connections?

Existing Airport Transport Forums at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stanstead appear to function well and forums of this nature should be developed through the continued dissemination of good practice.

- d) What are the likely costs and benefits of substitution between short haul air travel and rail, for example between London and major regional centres? If the benefits outweighed the costs what could the Government do to encourage substitution?

The costs and benefits need further research, but if the benefits were clear the Government should provide additional funds through the SRA to support the provision of such rail services.

Airspace

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issues raised in these questions.

Airlines

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issues raised in these questions.

Air Freight

- a) Should the Government encourage the development of dedicated freight airports?

The development of dedicated freight airports needs to be approached with caution. The majority of air freight at present travels in the holds of passenger aircraft. Developments in the design of passenger aircraft may affect the opportunity for further growth in air freight within the holds of such aircraft. A freight only airport might also have negative environmental and other impacts by virtue of the pattern of flights and ground operations. The interrelationship between passenger and freight movements therefore requires further careful consideration before determining the merits of any proposal for a dedicated freight airport. A general policy of encouragement would therefore be appropriate.

- b) What action might be taken to reduce the specific environmental costs attached to the structure and operation of the air cargo industry? What role could rail play in the movement of freight to, from and between airports? How could the Government promote the transfer of goods to airports by rail?

Rail has the potential to provide a highly complementary service for the air cargo industry, but this may require capital investment and, in the first instance, revenue support via the SRA in order to develop the potential.

- c) Is there more the Government could do to make the United Kingdom air freight industry more competitive, efficient and responsive to the needs of its customers?

The Regional Assembly is not in a position to offer considered advice on the issue raised in this question.

General Aviation

- a) Should the Government policy on general aviation build upon PPG13, perhaps with stronger guidelines about what should constitute suitable facilities for general aviation?

The Government should look to strengthen linkages with other policy areas and develop clear and more positive guidance on general aviation.

- b) Will it be possible to allow business aviation access to major airports where there is a pressing need to make the most efficient use of limited capacity?

Given the nature of the pressures on major airports it is unlikely that the requirements of business aviation could be satisfactorily accommodated. Consideration should be given to emphasising the need to develop good linkages with smaller airports, or perhaps regional airports providing business aviation facilities in close proximity to the major airports.

South East England Regional Assembly

March 2001