Campaign to Protect
Rural England

Policy Position Statement

Aviation

The air transport industry is committed to massive expansion in the coming years. The resulting increase in air traffic would bring noise, pollution, traffic and new development to many parts of the countryside, and undermine the Government's stated goal of taking action to tackle climate change. The Campaign to Protect Rural England believes the Government should develop policies to manage the growth of the aviation industry in order to protect the environment and help stabilise climate change.

The Government's Progress Report on the Air Transport White Paper, in December 2006, continued to support expansion of airports across the country to cater for growth. New runways, terminals, roads, housing and other developments are proposed.

What are the issues for the countryside?

Air traffic in the UK has trebled over the past 20 years and is forecast to continue to grow, with passenger numbers rising from 228 million a year in 2005 to 465 million by 2030 – growth of over 100 per cent. Such an increase in air travel would affect the countryside in three significant ways:

> **Construction**: the direct impact of new airports, runways and associated infrastructure, such as link roads and new buildings. Satisfying the forecast demand for air travel would mean the Government was supporting new runways and a major increase in the use of regional airports;

> **Noise**: there would be increased noise from more flights destroying the tranquillity of the countryside. In regions like the South East, air traffic growth would jeopardise the few remaining reservoirs of tranquillity shown on our Tranquillity Maps. CPRE's report, *Flying to Distraction*, showed how the effects of noise from aviation are felt well beyond the airport perimeter fence and are particularly disturbing in tranquil areas. This effect is compounded by the growth in road traffic to and from airports;

> **Pollution and climate change**: air transport produces carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other climate-changing and polluting emissions. Emissions of greenhouse gases from aviation are rising faster than from any other sector of industry and, being at altitude, they have more than double the effect of ground-based emissions. If this growth were to continue, it would undermine efforts being made by the Government and other sectors of industry to reduce emissions. Recent events have

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demonstrated that, if rapid action is not taken, climate change effects will continue to cause significant landscape changes due to changing weather and flooding.

CPRE's approach

CPRE believes that air travel has a role to play as part of an integrated transport system. As such, policies for its development should be governed by the same principles which currently apply to other modes of travel (such as road and rail) and which recognise the need to manage demand for travel in view of environmental constraints.

> CPRE believes Government policies for air travel should be environmentally sustainable and in keeping with the policies set out in the 2005 *Sustainable Development Strategy*. They should reflect the environmental impacts of air travel and promote the use of less environmentally damaging forms of communication (such as through teleconferencing and rail travel) where possible.

> It is wrong that forecast demand for air travel is driving the policy debate. Aviation policy needs to be brought into line with other areas of transport policy (such as road use), where there is recognition of the need to manage demand for travel and to make best use of existing infrastructure. Demand projections should, therefore, inform but not dictate aviation policy and be set alongside environmental capacity constraints in its formulation.

> Policy should avoid adverse environmental effects – mitigation or compensation is rarely effective or practical. We endorse the statement by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution in 2002 that 'if no limiting action is taken, the rapid growth in air transport will proceed in fundamental contradiction to the Government's stated goal of sustainable development'.

> Any proposals for airport development should be set within the context of wider discussions about spatial planning and recognise the knock-on implications that airports have on demand for housing and other infrastructure. Potential areas identified for airport development should be consistent with Regional Spatial Strategies, established planning policies, and only be considered where this will not result in environmental damage.

> Aircraft noise has a major impact on rural tranquillity. This is effectively ignored in the Air Transport White Paper. The growth in air traffic, and traffic management techniques such as 'stacking', have brought noise to parts of the countryside which would otherwise be tranquil. These wider impacts need to be formally recognised in the planning of aircraft movements and action must be taken to avoid or at least to minimise them. The measurement and standards used for levels of noise should be consistent with World Health Organisation standards, and the particularly damaging effect of aircraft noise on rural environments and tranquil areas recognised.

> The 'unique contribution' which the aviation industry often asserts that it makes to the economy in the UK is

significantly overstated, and the numbers of people employed are no more than those employed in rural tourism.

> Aviation – as a mode of travel – should not be singled out for special financial privileges, such as tax-free fuel, exemption from VAT and other forms of subsidy. These artificially inflate the demand for air travel, skew consumer choice towards environmentally unsustainable options, and contribute towards additional pressure for airport expansion.

> The tourism deficit of £18.6 bn is caused by more money being exported out of the country by UK residents travelling abroad than is received through incoming tourists. The primary cause of this is air travel, and this deficit damages the economy more than any benefit provided by aviation.

> The UK's own rural tourism industry is damaged both by aviation noise, which deters visitors to previously tranquil areas, and by cheap flights enticing people to fly abroad instead of taking holidays in this country.

> The true cost of air travel is not currently reflected in the cost of flying. CPRE recommends a package of measures to send appropriate price signals and to manage the demand for air travel. These should include:
  > introducing a tax on aviation and airport vehicle fuel;
  > VAT on airline tickets;
  > removing the industry's zero VAT rating;
  > a new environmental tax to reflect the cost of local air and noise pollution;
  > auctioning of slots at major airports;
  > replacement of the current Air Passenger Duty (APD) with a tax on the plane, not people. APD does not cover all the external costs attributable to aviation.

  If these actions were taken, the Department for Transport's own modelling shows that no new runways would be needed in the next 30 years.

> We support the proposal in the Air Transport White Paper for all airports to devise an airport master plan that includes resources to reduce the environmental impact of the facilities and the users of the airport. These master plans should be developed and monitored by independent parties, benefit from full public involvement and Strategic Environmental Assessment, and be legally binding on the airport operator.

> Airport Consultative Committees rarely provide the effective scrutiny of airports which they should, and therefore need to be strengthened and made genuinely independent.

> The benefits derived from technological improvements in the airline industry have been undermined by the overall rapid rate of growth in air travel. Moreover, in many cases these alleged improvements have yet to be confirmed in practice. This problem is not solved merely by pointing to the efforts being made to do so.

> We believe air transport policy should do all it can to reduce the impact of noise on people's quality of life and the countryside. This should include domestic measures to monitor and

Further reading

Airport Watch, Alexander's Ragtime Band. A critique of the Department for Transport's reliance on economic research sponsored by the aviation industry, 2007

CPRE, The Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom. A submission to the air transport consultation, 2003.

CPRE, Flying to Distraction leaflet, 2003

CPRE, Expanding Airports Destroy the Countryside leaflet, 2003.

CPRE, Tranquillity Maps, 2006.

CPRE, Saving Tranquil Places. How to protect and promote a vital asset, 2006.

Department for Transport, The Future of Air Transport Progress Report, 2006

Institute of Public Policy Research, High Stakes – designing emissions pathways to reduce the risk of dangerous climate change, 2006

control the noise from aircraft (whether landing or taking off) more effectively, including use of independent monitoring (e.g. by Defra) and a commitment to accelerate European agreements to bring less noisy aircraft into operation at the earliest possible stage.

> We give our unqualified support to calls for air transport emissions to be included both in the UK Government's Climate Change Bill and in the 'basket' of greenhouse gases covered by any successor to the Kyoto protocol on climate change. This should be accompanied by strong caps to reduce actual emissions.

> We support stronger controls on air pollution because air pollution and climate change are closely linked.

What can you do?

If you are concerned by the impacts of airports and air travel on the countryside, you can:

> contact your MP if you live in an area affected either by airport expansion, or the changes proposed by National Air Traffic Services to airspace in southern and eastern England. Ask for their views on these issues. Press for more concerted action to reduce the environmental damage caused by air travel;

> contact your CPRE branch or regional group (details from CPRE national office – see page 1) and find out what plans there are for airport expansion or airspace expansion in your area. Support local campaigns.

If you have a local airport:

> find out if an Airport Master Plan is being developed. Ensure those producing the plan know your concerns about the environmental impact of any proposed expansion and call for stringent controls on noise, air pollution, car parking and traffic levels, as well as ensure that the airport operator provides equitable funding for all additional infrastructure costs such as road transport;

> find out who the members of the Consultative Committee are, and contact those who represent external stakeholders such as residents of the local area.

If aircraft noise is a particular problem in your area, consider joining forces with other local parish, community and amenity groups to highlight the problem. Complain to the airport and keep a log of disturbances that you can use as a basis for discussion with the airport management and the local planning authority.

Finally, you can make a direct personal impact by asking the question, do I need to fly? Often train travel within the UK and to many European destinations is comparable in time and cost and causes far less environmental damage than flying. For business connections, why not see if video links or email connections will suffice, and save management time and money?

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Further reading continued

Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution, The Environmental Effects of Civil Aircraft in Flight, 2002 (www.rcep.org.uk)

Tyndall Centre, Growth scenarios for EU & UK aviation: contradictions with climate policy, 2006

Tyndall Centre, Aviation in a low-carbon EU, 2007