

Introduction

Do you have concerns about the current and future effects of aviation, either on your local community or nationally? If so you should join the 50 Local Authorities from across England that work together as the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group of the Local Government Association - SASIG.

SASIG's recent initiatives

As well as keeping our membership well informed, we have taken action on:

- climate change and local pollution;
- night flights and aircraft noise;
- economic costs and benefits;
- regional and strategic planning;
- surface access to airports;
- responding to major consultations;
- advice to Government and to the Local Government Association.

Government policy

In 2003 the Government predicted that the number of passengers at all UK airports would grow from around 180 million passengers per annum in 1998 to between 400 and 600 million by 2030. By 2005 there were 228 million passengers, with the percentage rate of growth in most recent years exceeding the forecasts. SASIG devoted much time and energy to working with the Department for Transport (DfT) and others to secure an aviation strategy that would manage or cater for that demand. That strategy was published by the Government in 'The Future of Air Transport' White Paper in December 2003. The aviation industry has since been implementing the White Paper proposals by producing and consulting on Master Plans that show their intentions for growth of airports, including surface access proposals. The Master Plans then become an input to the Local Development Plan process. It is vital that Local Authorities around airports are well informed in order to handle the plethora of studies, reports and ultimately planning applications that are produced in relation to aviation.

In December 2006 the DfT published a Progress Report on the White Paper. It

summarised the White Paper as having rejected a 'predict and provide' approach in favour of one in which aviation pays its environmental costs whilst at the same time bringing real economic and social benefits to people and the UK. The general message from the Government is that much has been achieved, the passenger forecasts to 2030 are robust and almost everything is going well.

SASIG's campaign work

SASIG seeks to ensure that the Government properly consider the economic, environmental and social impacts of aviation when taking decisions on aviation policy topics. In November 2006 SASIG published a report calling on the Government to review the 2003 White Paper, not just publish a Progress Report. SASIG wanted a debate to take place on the extent to which current policies are sustainable, particularly as climate change and local environmental impacts are now a much greater concern to the electorate than they were even as recently as 2003. SASIG is convinced that it played a major role in bringing this topic to the attention of MPs, Lords, the press and other opinion formers. The Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change (October 2006) also marked a turning point in discussions about sustainable transport. In addition, the Government's own advisor, the Sustainable Development Commission, has reported on the need for the evidence base, participation in, and policy for aviation to be revisited. SASIG is continuing to campaign for sustainable aviation to be achieved through the Government's aviation policy.

SASIG's representative role

In addition to working with and helping individual authorities, SASIG is involved with Governmental and industry-led groups, working to implement and monitor the White Paper as well as tackling subjects such as noise and sustainability. Examples of these are the DfT's Aviation External Advisory Group, the industry grouping 'Sustainable Aviation', and the DfT Steering Group on a study to assess community reactions to aircraft noise.

SASIG meetings

SASIG itself meets 3 times a year at the LGA offices in Smith Square, London. Each authority in membership can send one elected Member and one Officer – either can vote if necessary. In reality some authorities send more people and they are always welcome. Technical Officers from each member authority meet as and when necessary to consider major issues and to try to ensure that responses to consultation documents cover everyone's interests. For instance, SASIG Technical Officers have met to: discuss SASIG's policy principles; work with the DfT on guidance for the preparation of Airport Master Plans (AMPs); when responding to proposals for a new Aviation Duty; and to consider a large-scale airspace change proposal being consulted on by the airspace management company NATS Ltd..

Information from SASIG

One of SASIG's other major roles is to provide current and topical information to all its member authorities. This is done by email for urgent items, by the circulation of a fortnightly Bulletin of Parliamentary, industry and media news, and by occasional formal publications. There is no other source of such easily digestible and topical information, and the membership have repeatedly cited the value of the SASIG Bulletin.

SASIG's work programme

SASIG has agreed that its key roles over the next few years should be directed towards the implementation, monitoring and review of the Airports White Paper. In particular:

- increasing contact with regional organisations and seeking to influence the content of Regional Spatial Strategies;
- maintaining an involvement in the content of Airport Master Plans and their relationship with Local Development Documents;
- advising on the ways open to Local Authorities to minimise the environmental effects of aviation, particularly noise, night flights, air pollution and surface transport;
- collecting, analysing and disseminating technical and political information affecting airport planning, to and from the membership;
- reacting to and influencing aviation and environmental legislation;

- taking part in technical work, Government working parties and conferences;
- sharing and promoting good practice for airport and regional planning;
- advising the Local Government Association on any aviation issue; and
- promoting the need for a rolling programme to keep under review the national strategy for aviation development.

This work programme remains valid. SASIG's role has become even more important as we are all challenged by decisions about the impact of aviation on our day-to-day lives. How can we achieve the benefits that aviation gives us, but in a way that minimises the adverse impacts?

The SASIG organisation

The Chairman of SASIG is elected annually and is currently Cllr Jamie Macrae. The work of SASIG is undertaken by a full-time Director, Anna Mahoney, a full-time Policy Officer, David Joseph, and a part-time Information Officer (post to be filled in 2010/11). The costs of running SASIG are covered by membership subscriptions, which are set on a sliding scale dependant on the type and location of the authority, along with hosting services from one of the member authorities – currently Surrey County Council.

Should my local authority join SASIG?

Do you have an interest in national aviation policy, or do you have an airport in or near your area? If so the economic, social and environmental impact of aviation will affect you and SASIG operates to provide you with a forum to meet others who have common interests. You may want to support, influence or oppose the growth of your local airport – you need to be well informed and kept up-to-date in order to exert control. SASIG will help you achieve this.

For further information please contact:

SASIG
PO Box 1308
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 2WF
Tel: (020) 8541 9459
Fax: (020) 8541 9447
Email: sasig@surreycc.gov.uk
Web: www.sasig.org.uk

24 March 2010