

Sustainable Aviation – a unique aviation industry initiative

This country needs good air services and aviation is something we do well. We have world-leading airlines, airports, aerospace manufacturing and air traffic management companies. As the industry has become more efficient the cost of flying has fallen. Air travel is no longer the preserve of the rich and famous, despite what some lobbyists say. Opponents of air travel often accuse the industry of being subsidised – another myth. UK air travellers pay for all their infrastructure and are taxed in a similar way to other modes of public transport. The exception is that air travellers pay an environmental tax, Air Passenger Duty (APD), which raises over £900 million each year. This is far more than the cost of the carbon dioxide emitted on the flight and not a penny is used to address environmental impacts.

The aviation industry has a proud record on fuel efficiency and the reduction of noise. We are over 50% more fuel efficient than 30 years ago and quieter planes mean that the noise contour around our busiest airports has shrunk dramatically over the same period.

However, the UK industry recognises that demand for air travel is growing and, despite being a minor contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, it takes a responsible attitude to the environmental impacts and how they should be addressed. The four sectors - airlines, airports, aerospace manufacturers and air traffic management providers - have developed a world-leading joint sustainability strategy ***Sustainable Aviation*** which was published in June 2005. The full strategy document can be found at www.sustainableaviation.co.uk

With 8 Goals and 34 Commitments, the strategy covers the various environmental, social and economic impacts of aviation and sets out a coherent response to each of them. Considerable attention is given to the main environmental effects such as Noise, Local Air Quality and the big-ticket item, Climate Change.

The strategy has a two-pronged approach to **Climate Change**. It aims for a further 50% improvement in fuel efficiency by 2020 through new aircraft and more efficient operations. We also want to see air travel included in an international scheme designed to control total greenhouse gas concentrations. Ideally this should be a global scheme but inclusion in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) would be useful first step. There will be a cost which air travellers will pay but this is the most efficient approach and, unlike taxation, it makes a direct contribution to the control of emissions.

Although Carbon Dioxide(CO₂) is the main target of climate change policy, we recognise the other, less well understood, effects of aviation. These are quite different from CO₂ being local and short-lived whereas CO₂ has the same long-

term global effect wherever it is emitted. **Sustainable Aviation** explains our scientific understanding of these mechanisms and supports further research.

Airlines have also committed to reporting their emissions and their fuel efficiency on a regular basis and we are also looking at ways in which customers can be better informed of the climate impacts of their journey.

On **Noise**, the aim is to limit and, where possible reduce, the number of people affected by aircraft noise. The commitments in this area include a further 50% reduction in the noise of new aircraft and engines in 2020 compared with 2000 and the promotion of best-practice procedures and new noise-reduction techniques.

The industry commits to playing its full part in ensuring **Air Quality** limits are respected. Many parts of the country are faced with the challenge of meeting new EU air pollution limits in 2010 and the industry is actively engaged with local authorities around Heathrow to understand the air quality situation there and develop action plans that ensure the EU limits are met. The strategy includes a target to reduce emissions of Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) by 80% for new engines in 2020 compared with 2000. This target also contributes to the Climate Change strategy.

The three technology targets - on fuel efficiency, noise and NOx - are part of the Advisory Council for Aeronautical Research in Europe (**ACARE**) goals for the aerospace industry in Europe.

We must also recognise the international nature of the aviation industry and the role of Governments. So **Sustainable Aviation** includes a number of recommendations to government covering international actions such as the EU Emissions Trading Scheme and domestic ones such as planning guidelines around airports.

Sustainable Aviation is a continuing process and the industry is currently preparing its first progress report which is due to be published at the end of 2006.

We believe that this initiative will help us manage the impact of growing demand in a responsible way. If we succeed, air travel can continue to be the convenient, efficient and responsible mode of travel the world needs and increasingly expects.

Roger Wiltshire
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