SASIG MEETING: AIRPORTS COMMISSION'S INTERIM REPORT – CONTENT AND IMPLICATIONS

SASIG'S PRIORITY ACTIONS

Executive Summary

1 SASIG met on Monday 13 January 2014 to discuss initial reactions to the content and implications of the Airports Commission's Interim Report.

2 Following from that discussion, the priority areas for SASIG & its membership to focus on as the Commission's programme progresses are:

- Maintain involvement in the Commission process as appropriate.
- Provide input to the Government as well.
- Ascertain from the Commission the full basis on which its position has been based.
- Should full disclosure of background information not be forthcoming, raise this issue with the Government indicating omission(s) and implication(s).
- Input to the Commission, and Government, on the basis that:
    - phase two of the Commission's work must deliver a thorough, net economic assessment* if local communities are to capture their share of the aviation sector's economic and social benefits; and
    - the costs and extent of stimulated demand for land, housing & commercial activity, integrated road and rail provision, blight and emissions - noise, air, and climate change, must all be clearly accounted for.

  * a net economic assessment is one that takes account of the full infrastructure, urbanisation and catalytic effects of aviation development.

- If the factors required for a net economic assessment are not adequately incorporated in formation of the Commission's recommendations, we must work through the Government to achieve this.
- Work through the Government to ensure the opportunity costs of focussing investment and development in London and South East England have been fully evaluated in setting that focus, and determined to be acceptable in terms of not diminishing regeneration and development outside London and South East England.
- Press for the Independent Aviation Noise Authority to be: truly independent; a body with effective powers; and appropriately involved in the planning process.

Introduction

3 This meeting was SASIG's first group discussion of the Airports Commission's Interim Report that was published on 17 December 2013.

4 The Group recognised some of the political sensitivities, such as the need for a deliverable recommendation that is seen to have been reached on a fair and thorough basis, to a suitable timetable.

5 As evident at the meeting, there are a number of areas on which questions are being asked, and where further action is seen as necessary.

6 From across this range of comment, it is essential to draw out the priority messages for the Group.

7 This note supplies those Group priorities, suitable for mention in all our work with the Commission and the Government.

8 The full range of discussion at the meeting is covered in this note, recognising the breadth and complexity of the issues, and that these are initial reactions to the Interim Report – further issues may yet come to light.

9 As always, ongoing discussion, assessment and collaboration across the SASIG membership is invited and commended.

PRIORITY AREAS FOR FOCUS

Working with Central Government

ISSUE

10 Alongside full and appropriate input to the Airports Commission, future discussion and challenge should be aimed at the Government, as it is for the Government to determine implementation following receipt of the Commission's recommendations.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

11 Maintain involvement in the Commission process as appropriate.

12 Provide input to the Government as well.

Transparency of assessment

ISSUES

13 Having confidence in the Commission's position relies on full supply of background information. There is not yet confidence that this information has all been supplied.

14 For instance, economic analysis headlines in the Interim Report are not detailed in the accompanying Appendix (Technical Appendix 3) referenced as the source of background detail.

15 The methodology, metrics and data used for assessments must be made available along with any associated peer reviews.

16 With a view to future policy-making, it should be recognised that so long as the evidence is there the Government can take on board the Commission's recommendations.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

17 Ascertain from the Commission the full basis on which its position has been based.

18 Should this not be forthcoming, raise this issue with the Government indicating omission(s) and implication(s).

Assessing infrastructure, urbanisation and catalytic effects

ISSUES

19 The Commission's brief has not required them to apply an approach such as would be used to assess a planning application. This leaves a range of factors unaddressed, all of which are pertinent to Local Authorities.

20 Recommendations made by the Commission in the absence of having considered the full range of relevant factors must be recognised as such by the Government.

21 Those recommendations that the Government wishes to progress must be subjected to appropriate assessment across the full range of associated factors.

22 SASIG should work through the Government to ensure these factors are accounted for.

23 Will the Commission's Appraisal Framework assist with progress towards this goal?

PRIORITY ACTIONS

24 Input to the Commission, and Government, on the basis that:

- phase two of the Commission's work must deliver a thorough, net economic assessment* if local communities are to capture their share of the aviation sector's economic and social benefits; and
- the costs and extent of stimulated demand for land, housing & commercial activity, integrated road and rail provision, blight and emissions - noise, air, and climate change, must all be clearly accounted for.

* a net economic assessment is one that takes account of the full infrastructure, urbanisation and catalytic effects of aviation development.

25 If these factors are not adequately incorporated in formation of the Commission's recommendations, we must work through the Government to achieve this.

Regional development

ISSUES

26 The argument and rationale for the Airports Commission's short-list does not reflect the Government's responsibility to 'rebalance the national economy'. This can be clearly linked to the Commission's brief, which does not require them to address this matter.

27 Questions remain about how the Government will deliver economic growth beyond London and South East England in the context of this focus of activity, development and funding going to London and South East England.

28 This goes beyond development in London and South East England supporting development elsewhere in the country, and taking full account of the specifics and scale of funding that should be spent outside London and South East England, recognising the positive outcomes from such spending in terms of social equity and opportunity.

PRIORITY ACTIONS

29 SASIG & its membership should work through the Government to ensure the opportunity costs of focussing investment and development in London and South East England have been fully evaluated in setting that focus, and determined to be acceptable in terms of not diminishing regeneration and development outside London and South East England.

Noise

ISSUES

30 Will the proposed Independent Aviation Noise Authority be:

- truly independent?
- a body with effective powers (e.g. acting as a regulator)?
- appropriately involved in the planning process?

PRIORITY ACTION

31 SASIG & its membership should press for the Independent Aviation Noise Authority to be: truly independent; a body with effective powers; and appropriately involved in the planning process.

Airports National Policy Statement (NPS)

ISSUES

32 An Airports National Policy Statement (NPS) has yet to be produced; to what extent will the Commission's work be appropriate for input to production of the NPS?
(NB Taking into account the fact that large-scale, high-level recommendations have been made, ruling out some options, and supporting others.)

External parties & environmental controls/limits – climate change, emissions trading, and airspace safety & capacity across Europe

ISSUES

33 A number of questions were raised regarding the way in which the Commission has worked with other parties, i.e. taken advice from, complied with the approach of, or set a different path?

- How far has the Airports Commission taken onboard the advice of the Committee on Climate Change?
- Can aviation emissions be traded away, should they, and how practical is this?
- How far was Eurocontrol (the European airspace regulator) complied with in selecting the short-, medium- and long-term measures?
- How far will Eurocontrol be complied with in assessing the short-listed, long-term options?

34 If the Commission's recommendations for development in the aviation sector can only be accommodated within the bounds of domestic climate change legislation on the basis that all other UK sectors decarbonise on a scale of around 85%, should those recommendations be taken forward by the Government for implementation?

35 Many of these questions are ones on which definitive comment or position cannot readily be derived for the Group. These are complex, uncertain and highly specialised areas; should SASIG wish to make points on these issues, external support should be sought.

Commission's recommendations to date

ISSUES

36 We have reached a point at which large-scale, high-level recommendations (not decisions) have been made, moving away from some options, and supporting others.

37 Do the short-listed long-term options offer the chance of realising a viable, strategic, long-term outcome?

38 Are the opportunity costs (and, to some extent, subsequent lack of investment) of the rejected options understood and acceptable?

39 What will the outcome be of this level of support not being given to the rejected options?

40 Are we in a robust position?

41 Has an appropriate process been followed, in terms of short-listing based on data and information provided by scheme bidders themselves? To what extent has the Commission's work yielded a robust assessment of the input data, and thus minimised/done away with such concerns?
(NB – need to consider the counter questions.)

Further items raised

42 'Early-morning smoothing' and the 'Westerly preference' at Heathrow Airport.

43 The role of the Highways Agency and Network Rail in assessing and delivering future surface access requirements.

44 How much growth would be allowed under any new expansion arrangements?

45 Are the Airports Commission 'boxing themselves in' by narrowing down the short-list to so few options so quickly? This includes consideration of the proximity of short-listed options to London.

46 What does the future of aviation hold in terms 'point-to-point' airline services and 'hub and spoke' arrangements?

47 General aviation airfields – proposal to allow for scheduled flights

48 Local Enterprise Partnerships' (LEP) strategies.

Contact Officers: Anna Mahoney, SASIG Director; Mark Mason, SASIG Information Officer
Email: sasig@surreycc.gov.uk Web: www.sasig.org.uk
Tel.: (020) 8541 9459 / 07968 832 687 Date: 24.01.2014