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## **SASIG 2011/12 Meeting Dates**

Forthcoming SASIG meetings in 2011/12 will be on:

**Friday 28 October 2011 and Friday 24 February 2012.**

Meetings are held between 11am and 1pm, at Local Government House, Smith Square, SW1P 3HZ, with lunch provided afterwards; a location map is at <http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=27909>.

## **Central Government and Agencies**

### **Defra - Consultation on air quality plans to meet nitrogen dioxide limits**

9 June 2011

A consultation on a package of updated draft air quality plans that aim to meet the EU limit values for nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) in England has been launched. These plans will form the basis of the UK notification to the European Commission for additional time to comply with the NO<sub>2</sub> limit values.

The Government has been working with regional and local authorities on ways to meet the EU limits. The published draft plans set out current and planned actions to meet the NO<sub>2</sub> limit values in 40 of the UK's 43 air quality zones where the Government's assessment shows that one or more of those values is exceeded. The plans show that improvements have been made, with emission of oxides of nitrogen down by 39% between 2000 and 2009, and that 95% of UK roads assessed are currently expected to meet the NO<sub>2</sub> limits by 2015.

The consultation is open for eight weeks and the documents can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/consult/2011/06/09/air-quality>

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## **Westminster Debates and Legislation**

### **Lords Second Reading - Localism Bill**

7 June 2011

The Localism Bill has been read for the second time in the House of Lords.

Communities and Local Government Minister, Baroness Hanham, introduced the Localism Bill by stating that for generations Governments had concentrated control in Whitehall, which had tied the hands of Councillors. The Bill would result in a historic shift of power, the Minister said.

Baroness Hanham said that the Government had brought forward amendments to strengthen strategic planning and made neighbourhood forums more inclusive, after concerns were raised in the House of Commons.

At the heart of the Bill was the power of competence, the Minister said, stressing that this would not allow Councils to stop providing valuable services. Baroness Hanham conceded that the plans to introduce elected Mayors in England's largest cities had caused controversy.

On other aspects of the Bill, the Minister said that community groups would have the right to challenge Councils to seriously consider their proposals for the improvement of local services. These groups would also have the right to buy assets of community value, the Minister added.

Baroness Hanham said that the Bill provided greater discretion for Councils and social landlords to manage social housing more effectively. Social landlords would have greater flexibility over the length of tenancy, the Minister added, although the minimum length of an agreement would be two years.

On social housing regulation, the Minister said that tenant panels or equivalent bodies would replace the Tenants Services Authority.

In response, Labour Shadow Communities and Local Government Minister, Lord Beecham, welcomed some provisions of the Bill, as the local Government world had called for a power of general competence for some time. He also supported changes to small business rate relief and the housing revenue account.

However, overall the Shadow Minister felt that the Bill was “studded with populist gesture politics” and criticised the number of powers that would be given to the Secretary of State. Lord Beecham felt that most community groups involved in the provision of services acknowledged that they complemented statutory services but did not wish to replace them.

When Lord Beecham discussed elected Mayors, he called the concentration of powers in a single pair of hands undesirable. He felt that new powers to call a referendum could cause community division, as extremist groups could reach the 5 per cent threshold required.

Labour Whip, Lord Stevenson of Balmacara, argued that there should be a robust presumption in favour of sustainable development in the Bill. He wanted to ensure that the new planning system allowed what was required by the current generation, while ensuring that the needs of future generations would not be compromised. He felt that the aspect of the Bill that meant financial considerations from a proposed development would be considered alongside planning applications should be withdrawn.

Crossbench peer, Lord Best, was concerned that that stepping back from national standards in the planning system could mean poorer design and was nervous about measures to remove national protections in rent levels and the security of tenure for social housing tenants.

Liberal Democrat peer, Lord Shipley, was unsurprised that there was concern that the Bill had not been drafted in the spirit of localism, as too many powers would be assigned to the Secretary of State and Whitehall to regulate and micromanage.

The Bill was successfully read a second time and will now move to Committee Stage.

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## Westminster Committees

### Environmental Audit Committee Inquiry into Air Quality

8 June 2011

The Environmental Audit Committee has taken evidence from the following representatives as part of their inquiry into air quality:

- James Grugeon, Healthy Air Campaign,
- Ed Dearnley, Environmental Protection UK,
- Professor Frank Kelly, King's College London, and
- Councillor Richard Kemp, Vice Chairman, Local Government Group.

Public awareness of the seriousness of air pollution was needed to improve air quality, MPs have heard. Understanding the impact of poor air quality on public health would encourage change, it was thought.

A clear understanding of local and national responsibilities was also required if air pollution was to be reduced. EU air quality targets would not be met and EU standards for transport would have to be reformed to recognise real life conditions.

Further details are at [Annex A](#) .

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## Events and Speeches

### Transport Secretary Philip Hammond makes speech at Aviation Club Lunch

10 June 2011

Philip Hammond, Transport Secretary, has set out in a speech to the Aviation Club how the coalition Government's priorities of cutting the deficit, re-establishing sustainable growth and reducing carbon, made the task of defining his Department's priorities straightforward: to ensure that the transport agenda supports economic growth, while contributing to deficit reduction and carbon reduction. Mr Hammond added that the challenge for his Department, in particular, is to demonstrate that 'supporting economic growth' and 'reducing carbon' are not mutually incompatible aims.

Mr Hammond characterised the Government's early, and firm, commitment to not pursue a third runway at Heathrow, as one that clearly derived from both the Conservative & Liberal Democrat manifestos. It was not, as many in the audience believed, loaded with aviation-hostile symbolism. On the contrary - the Government's position is based on an understanding that the aviation sector is not only an important part of the economy in its own right – sustaining tens of thousands of jobs – but even more critically, that aviation supports economic growth and the generation of wealth across the whole economy. The Government clearly understands that if our economy is to grow, aviation must also be able to grow, clarified Mr Hammond.

Thus, the starting point was common ground; however, with the challenge of global warming as stark as ever - even if attention is understandably focussed at the moment on the short-term economic challenges - growth cannot be at any cost.

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Hence the Government has committed to delivering a new aviation strategy, beginning, it was hoped, a new chapter in the aviation policy debate.

New ways to incentivise investment in the decarbonisation of air travel must be found, ensuring the UK can lead the global debate, and shape a low-emission aviation sector of the future, without disadvantaging UK airline or airport operators.

Mr Hammond did not consider that the EU ETS would in itself be sufficient to drive innovation quickly or deeply enough. Hence the continuing need for the UK to work with ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to push for international agreement on aviation emissions, ensuring that the playing field is level as quickly as possible. Even modest gains such as the aspirational goal agreed by ICAO for stabilising CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from 2020, are seen as a step forward.

In the context of the environmental framework increasingly constraining the shape and direction of aviation growth, the Secretary of State called on the industry to explore with him what they expect technological change to be able to deliver, over the next thirty or forty years – on carbon, noise, and air quality – and on what timescale they expect those developments to be made.

This environmental framework encompasses local impacts too - primarily noise, in addition to climate change.

Trading, and then technology, is to provide the answer to the carbon challenge; progress in engine design is to reduce per flight noise impacts. These two routes will provide headroom for the industry to grow.

The Transport Secretary then went on to speak about the more immediate challenges of safety, security, improving the passenger experience, and making the best use of existing capacity.

The full text of the Transport Secretary's speech is at:  
<http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/speeches/hammond-20110609/>

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## House of Commons Questions

### **Cunningham, Jim - Aviation (air pollution)**

7 June 2011

**Jim Cunningham MP, Backbencher (Labour Party; Coventry South):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to mitigate the local environmental effects of aviation; and what assessment he has made of the environmental effects of aviation on communities in the Midlands. [55463]

**Theresa Villiers MP, Aviation Minister (Conservative Party; Chipping Barnet)** [holding answer 17 May 2011]: The local environmental impact of aircraft operations is a key priority for Government. That is why we have cancelled plans for a third runway at Heathrow and will not support proposals for additional runways at Gatwick and Stansted.

Aviation must be able to grow to support the future prosperity of the UK but this has to be within the context of delivering environmental goals and protecting the quality of life of local

communities. We are therefore currently consulting on principles that might underpin a sustainable framework for aviation. This consultation, which has a particular focus on the local environmental impacts, provides a key opportunity for all those affected by these impacts to contribute to the debate and offer views on the future direction of policy.

Outside Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted airports where statutory noise control measures apply, airports (including those situated in the Midlands) have been encouraged to engage constructively with local communities through Joint Consultative Committees in developing and implementing noise control measures, appropriate to local circumstances which can vary considerably from airport to airport. Over 51 airports are statutorily required to provide consultative facilities. The Government have issued guidance to assist airports and Joint Consultative Committees in developing effective local consultation.

Birmingham and East Midlands airports, in common with other major airports in England, have been required to produce strategic Noise Action Plans for consideration for formal adoption under the European Environmental Noise Directive. These plans are currently being reviewed and a decision on formal adoption will be made shortly.

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#### **Eagle, M - Access to Airports During Severe Weather Conditions**

7 June 2011

**Maria Eagle MP, Shadow Transport Secretary (Labour Party; Garston and Halewood):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what assistance his Department has provided to (a) Local Authorities and (b) the Highways Agency on preparations for the clearance of trunk and local roads providing access to airports during times of severe weather conditions. [56117]

**Norman Baker MP, Transport Minister (Liberal Democrats; Lewes):** For those access roads to airports which are the responsibility of the relevant local Highway Authority, such Authorities have a duty under section 41 of the Highways Act 1980 “to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that safe passage along a highway is not endangered by snow or ice”.

However, the Department for Transport encourages Local Authorities to have a robust winter service plan in place and expects Authorities to communicate on a regular basis with the local community, including businesses and other key stakeholders within their respective areas, including airport operators.

With respect to the strategic road network, every year the Highways Agency produces detailed winter service plans setting out all aspects of the winter service to be delivered across its network during the forthcoming winter season, to keep the network safe and available for use through severe weather conditions. These winter service plans, which build on lessons learned from the previous winter season, are shared with key stakeholders and, together with more direct consultation, help to ensure that access to critical national infrastructure such as airports is maintained.

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## **Morrice - Air Pollution**

7 June 2011

**Graeme Morrice MP, PPS to Shadow Business, Innovation and Skills Secretary John Denham (Labour Party; Livingston):** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what steps she is taking to reduce the effects on health of levels of air quality. [57255]

**Richard Benyon MP, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister (Conservative Party; Newbury):** The Government take air quality issues seriously and have committed to a number of initiatives which will reduce air pollution (targeting transport in the main), including: over £400 million for measures to promote the uptake of ultra-low carbon vehicle technologies; a £560 million Local Sustainable Transport Fund to provide funding for Local Authorities to support sustainable travel; and a £45 million Green Bus Fund to encourage the uptake of low-emission buses.

The Government also recently committed £5 million to fund a programme of localised measures designed to reduce concentrations of particulate matter in London - the only UK location assessed to have areas that do not comply with the European limit value for this pollutant.

The Government are reviewing what further action can be taken to communicate the impacts of air pollution more effectively, and, through a partnership approach, establish stronger messages about tackling the health impacts of air pollution and what action people can take to reduce air pollution. Examples of such initiatives include 'active travel', which promotes walking and cycling, leading to reduced health risks and improved air quality; and 'smarter choices' measures aimed at behaviour change. The Government will continue to investigate measures to improve air quality and will shortly be consulting on their plans to achieve limit values for nitrogen dioxide.

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## **Donohoe - Heathrow**

23 June 2011

**Brian Donohoe MP, Backbencher (Labour Party; Central Ayrshire)** noted that British Airways would invest in Madrid since they could not expand Heathrow.

**Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge):** said he was glad that BA had recognised that the Government would not expand Heathrow. Aviation would be needed in the South East of England and a new sustainable aviation strategy would be devised in order to meet these aims, he said.

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## **Eagle, M - Regional Airports**

23 June 2011

**Maria Eagle MP, Shadow Transport Secretary (Labour Party; Garston and Halewood)** expressed concerns from the business community that the Government was not planning to expand regional air travel.

Responding, **Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge)** wondered if Labour still supported a third runway at Heathrow. The Government had cancelled these plans because of the environmental damage it would have caused, he said. A new sustainable airport strategy would be developed, he said.

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## **Leech – APD holiday for regional airports**

23 June 2011

**John Leech MP, Backbencher (Liberal Democrats; Manchester, Withington)** wondered whether the DfT would discuss the idea of an APD holiday for regional airports with the Treasury.

Responding, **Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge)** noted that the Chancellor had conducted a review on APD. Any changes would have to be revenue neutral, he said.

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## **Stringer - Regional Airports**

23 June 2011

**Graham Stringer MP, Backbencher (Labour Party; Blackley and Broughton)** called for greater support for regional airports.

**Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge)** agreed that regional airports should play a role to help meet growing demand, an ambition which would be aided by high-speed rail.

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## **Freer – South-East Airports**

23 June 2011

In response to a question from **Mike Freer MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Finchley and Golders Green)** on what recent representations he has received on the competitiveness of UK airports, **Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge)** stated that he regularly received representation from airports.

Following up, **Mike Freer** discussed a tax on south-east airports, and wondered what assessment had been made of that 'ludicrous' suggestion. In reply, **Philip Hammond** said that the Chancellor would respond to the suggestions made by regional airports to the consultation.

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## **Smith, H - London Airports**

21 June 2011

**Henry Smith MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Crawley):** Last week, a consortium of regional airports called for a congestion tax on London airports such as Gatwick in my constituency. Will the Treasury rule out such an absurd and, frankly, anti-free trade measure?

**Justine Greening MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Conservative Party; Putney):** My hon. Friend is right to refer to the importance of the aviation sector. As he will know, the consultation on reform of air passenger duty closed last Friday, and we have received a number of different representations from stakeholders. He will be aware that this is partly about looking at what we can do to support regional airports, but we certainly do not want to do that at the expense of our other key airports in the south-east.

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## **Goldsmith - Aviation (impact on air quality)**

22 June 2011

**Zac Goldsmith MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps he is taking to reduce the effects of aviation on air quality. [60236]

**Theresa Villiers MP, Aviation Minister (Conservative Party; Chipping Barnet):** On 30 March 2011, the Government issued a Scoping Document entitled 'Developing a sustainable framework for UK aviation'. This sets out a number of strategic questions, which will help define the debate as we develop a long-term strategy for aviation. It includes a section on local air quality. The deadline for responses is 30 September. Also, the UK is supporting work in the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) to develop a new standard to regulate the emission of PM (particulate matter) from aircraft engines.

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## **Poulter - Air Routes**

21 June 2011

**Dr Daniel Poulter MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Central Suffolk and North Ipswich):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department is taking to ensure transparency in decision-making procedures relating to new flight paths. [59800]

**Theresa Villiers MP, Aviation Minister (Conservative Party; Chipping Barnet):** The Directorate of Airspace Policy, part of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), is responsible for the UK's airspace change process. This is implemented in accordance with CAP (Civil Aviation Publication) 724, the 'Airspace Charter', to ensure fair and effective regulation of the airspace system. CAP 725, CAA 'Guidance on the Application of the Airspace Change Process', sets out the consultation process an airspace change sponsor must follow before it formally submits an airspace change request to the CAA. It specifies that the CAA will be openly and transparently accountable in making its regulatory decisions.

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### **Ellwood - Airports (Fees and Charges)**

21 June 2011

**Tobias Ellwood MP, PPS to Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox (Conservative Party; Bournemouth East):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether his Department provides guidance to international airports on charges for access for the drop-off of air passengers. [60391]

**Theresa Villiers MP, Aviation Minister (Conservative Party; Chipping Barnet):** The Department for Transport does not provide guidance to airport operators on air passenger drop-off charges. The establishment and setting of such charges is a commercial matter for airport operators.

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### **Pincher – High-Speed Rail Projects**

14 June 2011

**Christopher Pincher MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Tamworth):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans for (a) public consultation on and (b) primary legislation to authorise the construction of high-speed rail projects other than HS2. [58325]

**Philip Hammond MP, Transport Secretary (Conservative Party; Runnymede and Weybridge):** Our current plans are limited to the HS2 project for a high-speed line from London to Birmingham and onward to Leeds and Manchester, with a spur to Heathrow airport.

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### **Smith, H - Taxation (Aviation)**

13 June 2011

**Henry Smith MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Crawley):** To ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer what the grounds in international law are for his decision not to proceed with a per plane tax. [59124]

**Justine Greening MP, Economic Secretary to the Treasury (Conservative Party; Putney):** I refer the hon. Member to the answer given to him on 23 May 2011, Official Report, columns 359-60W.

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### **Ellwood - Bournemouth Airport**

13 June 2011

**Tobias Ellwood MP, PPS to Defence Secretary Dr Liam Fox (Conservative Party; Bournemouth East):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he or his Department's officials have to visit Bournemouth International airport in the next year. [59385]

**Theresa Villiers MP, Aviation Minister (Conservative Party; Chipping Barnet):** Transport Ministers and officials have no current plans to visit Bournemouth International airport in the next year.

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### **Goldsmith - Noise (Heathrow Airport)**

13 June 2011

**Zac Goldsmith MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what progress her Department has made in implementing the provisions of the Noise Policy Statement for England at Heathrow and the surrounding area. [58190]

**Richard Benyon MP, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister (Conservative Party; Newbury):** The Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE) is becoming embedded in a wide range of policies including the White Paper 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon - Making Sustainable Local Transport Happen', published in January 2011, and the consultation document 'Developing a sustainable framework for UK aviation: Scoping document', published in March 2011, both of which affect Heathrow and the surrounding area.

Furthermore, the various Noise Action Plans adopted under the Environmental Noise Directive, including those covering the London agglomeration, major roads, major railways and Heathrow airport also embrace the principles found in the NPSE.

Consequently, good progress is being made in implementing the NPSE at Heathrow and the surrounding area.

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### **Goldsmith - Noise (Heathrow Airport)**

13 June 2011

**Zac Goldsmith MP, Backbencher (Conservative Party; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs what recent assessment she has made of the UK's capacity to meet its obligations under the EU Environmental Noise Directive at Heathrow and the surrounding area. [58191]

**Richard Benyon MP, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Minister (Conservative Party; Newbury):** The production of Noise Action Plans (NAPs) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC. The NAPs for 23 agglomerations, including London, and for major roads and railways have been adopted and published. The London

Agglomeration NAP, which includes Heathrow and the surrounding area, and the associated first priority location maps, can be found at:

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/quality/noise/environmental-noise/action-plans/>

The Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, my right hon. Friend the Member for Meriden (Caroline Spelman), formally adopted the Noise Action Plan for Heathrow airport on 19 May 2011 and the final plan will shortly be published by the airport.

Consequently, together with the noise mapping that was completed in 2007 and the information that can be found on the DEFRA website showing the results of the mapping, the UK has fully met all its obligations with regard to the Environmental Noise Directive at Heathrow and the surrounding area.

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## **House of Commons - Statements**

### **Hammond makes statement on NATS Ltd (Government share ownership)**

8 June 2011

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr Philip Hammond): Today I am publishing a call for evidence to support my decision making in whether to sell all, part or none of the Government's 49% shareholding in NATS - formerly National Air Traffic Services.

It was announced in the Budget March 2011 that the Government "intends to realise value from its shareholding in NATS, subject to considering the views of key interested parties".

This commitment reflects the Government's policy that assets held in the public sector, where there is no policy requirement to do so, tie up state resources that could deliver better value for money for the public if used elsewhere. We are seeking evidence through this process from key interested parties including the regulator, employees of NATS and the wider aviation industry, to establish whether or not there is a policy requirement to retain a shareholding in NATS.

NATS provides strategically important services to the UK and as such, I want to ensure that the overall aviation policy objectives of safety, security, economic regulation, civil/military co-operation, environment and supporting the Single European Sky programme are not compromised by any decisions we take over future share ownership. The call for evidence document outlines the controls and protections that exist in NATS' operating environment independent of the Government's shareholding and seeks evidence from consultees on what, if any, protections would be required on top of these to allow the delivery of these objectives.

The call for evidence will be open from today until 6 July and we aim to publish the results shortly after the closing date. The evidence collected will support my final decision about whether to sell Government shares in NATS.

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## House of Commons - Early Day Motion

### New EDM 1979 - British Airways

22 June 2011

That this House acknowledges that the long running, unnecessary industrial dispute at British Airways has finally reached a satisfactory conclusion; recognises the costs incurred by all involved; and congratulates both the new management teams at Unite the union and British Airways who have demonstrated that progressive industrial relations are far more productive than confrontation.

## House of Lords

### Empey - Gatwick Airport

14 June 2011

**Lord Empey (Backbencher, Conservative)** - To ask Her Majesty's Government whether a discrimination complaint has been lodged with the Civil Aviation Authority against the owner of Gatwick Airport, under Section 41 of the Airports Act 1986. [HL9726]

**Earl Attlee (Government whip, Conservative)**: The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has received a complaint from Flybe that the charges that Gatwick Airport introduced on 1 April 2011 unreasonably discriminate against operators of smaller aircraft. The CAA is conducting a preliminary examination of the complaint to decide if it should carry out a full investigation under the Airports Act 1986.

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### Empey - Regional Airports

13 June 2011

**Lord Empey (Backbencher, Conservative)** - To ask Her Majesty's Government what policy they have in place to ensure that major regional cities in the United Kingdom will continue to have economically sustainable air route access to London airports. [HL9727]

**Earl Attlee (Government whip, Conservative)**: The Government fully recognise the vital contribution airports make to regional economies. It is the Government's intention to develop an aviation policy framework which supports economic growth and seeks to create the right conditions for regional airports to flourish.

On 30 March, the Department for Transport (DfT) published a scoping document which aims to define the debate to help us develop a new long-term policy to enable aviation to grow in the years to come, while also addressing its environmental impacts. The document, which asks stakeholders to provide views on a full range of issues, including regional connectivity and regional airports, is available on the DfT website.

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Most of the Parliamentary information in this Bulletin and some news items were sourced from De Havilland Information Services plc.

The following sources are also used: ABTN Air & Business Travel News, ACI Airports Council International, AERBT An Executive Review of Business Travel, Airwise.com, Anna Aero, Aviation International, BAA Ltd, ENDS Environmental Data Services, Financial Times, IATA International Air Transport Association, BBC, The Guardian, The Independent, Planning Portal, The Telegraph, Transportinfo, United Kingdom Parliament.

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## Environmental Audit Committee – Air Quality Inquiry Evidence Session

### Introduction

Opening the session, Committee Chairman and Labour MP, Joan Walley, asked what health problems poor air quality created. Some people were acutely affected by air pollution, but there were also chronic affects, which were a wider public health concern, Professor Frank Kelly replied. In 2008, 29,000 people died prematurely from air pollution and it also reduced life expectancy, he said. Damage to the environment was also a concern though it had not been quantified, Professor Kelly said.

Lower-income communities were affected most by poor air pollution, James Grugeon added.

Large areas of the UK would not meet EU requirements on nitrogen dioxide, Ed Dearnley said. There were also other targets that would not be met yet the Government had no plans in place, he feared.

The UK Government might be trying to water down EU regulations, Mr Grugeon warned.

Councillor Richard Kemp warned that measures in the Localism Bill that allowed EU fines to be imposed on Local Authorities were an arbitrary approach that discouraged cooperation.

Aside from commitments in the Coalition Agreement, the Government had taken little action to improve air quality policy, Mr Dearnley felt. In agreement, Cllr Kemp felt public awareness on air pollution was very low. Although air quality had been included in the Coalition Agreement, it had been left out of Defra and DfT's business plans.

City areas, notably transport, should be prioritised, Prof Kelly said. He advised greater use of public transport and larger congestion charging zones or low emission zones to decrease the most polluting vehicles from coming in to the centre of London.

Pressed further on Government policy by Labour MP, Martin Caton, Prof Kelly feared that the Government had used EU funding in London to seek short-term solutions in order to meet EU targets. This could not be sustained in the longer-term and was proving to be highly costly, he warned.

The public must understand the scale of the air quality problem in the UK, he stressed.

Conservative MP Neil Carmichael wondered how the Government could improve joined-up efforts on air quality. The Cabinet Office should lead a national strategy, which could then support localised strategies, Mr Grugeon suggested. Air quality should be linked more closely with public health concerns, he added.

### Local and Central Government links

Cllr Kemp called for a clearer understanding over the relationship between local and national levels of Government and where responsibilities should lay. Pressed further by Conservative MP, Zac Goldsmith, Cllr Kemp said it was right for central Government to set the policy direction, but Local Authorities could only achieve these outcomes if they had the necessary powers.

The renewable heat incentive had failed to consider air quality and was often seen by the Department for Energy & Climate Change (DECC) as a barrier to their schemes, Mr Dearnley commented.

Councils rarely understood the challenge of air quality especially as it was not visible, Cllr Kemp continued. Greater awareness was needed, not more guidance, he said.

Engagement between Local Authorities and central Government was critical, Mr Grugeon agreed. A compelling metric, such as premature deaths, was one way to create a convincing message concerning the gravity of air pollution. Clearer links between air quality, public health and transport issues were needed, he said, but conceded that local Councils were currently under real pressures.

Local Councils had the skills and knowledge necessary, but were not aware of the seriousness of poor air quality, Cllr Kemp concurred.

Mr Dearnley warned that while public health may be a Local Authority issue, transport was often a county level responsibility. Action to improve transport in London demanded national action across local Councils, Prof Kelly added.

Conservative MP, Peter Aldous, wondered if the incentives on Local Authorities were sufficient. The major inhibitor was the lack of clarity over local and central Government relations; an incentive was not needed if the evidence was clear enough, Cllr Kemp said. He suspected that requiring Local Authorities to pay fines for pollution would lead to an increase in legal cases.

Mr Dearnley called for a bottom-up approach with greater involvement from the public. A national framework for low emission zones was needed, he said. He agreed that imposing fines on Local Authorities was unfair.

During the session, Cllr Kemp voiced support for electric cars. However, increased use of electric cars demanded national leadership in cooperation with electricity generators, he said.

In agreement, Zac Goldsmith felt that Local Authorities would be widely criticised if they invested in an electric grid without clear national leadership.

## **Public Health**

Ideally the Department of Health should lead on air pollution, but since this was not currently feasible, the Cabinet Office should take the lead, Mr Grugeon said.

Devolving public health back to the local level was a positive step, Cllr Kemp welcomed. Cooperation between public health officials and environment agencies would allow Local Authorities to tackle air pollution more effectively he said.

Labour MP Dr Alan Whitehead suspected that this would highlight a number of hidden costs.

Mr Grugeon feared that considerations of air quality did not currently include longer-term issues such as the environmental impact of new buildings.

The Localism Bill must empower health, transport and environment officials at the local level so they could act as multi-disciplinary teams, Prof Kelly said.



Targets for local Government should be set locally, Mr Grugeon said. Such efforts must also consider the resources to be transferred from the Department of Health to the local level, he added.

The Highways Agency should have a duty to improve air quality, Mr Dearnley felt.

### **Low Emission zones (LEZs)**

Evidence from London indicated that cleaner vehicles now operated in the City and was having an effect on black carbon, Prof Kelly said. It would take another 5-10 years before the impact on public health could be assessed, he said.

The UK could look to efforts by EU members to assess the success of LEZs, Mr Dearnley said. He called for a national framework to help Local Authorities roll out these zones.

The cost for London had been high given the technology used, although Germany had used far cheaper options, Prof Kelly told the Committee. He felt there were no risks in applying LEZs. He went on to highlight a study in America and the role of the Air Quality Act that found improved air quality had improved public health.

Labour MP Dr Alan Whitehead feared that high-polluting vehicles would simply drive elsewhere. This could be avoided by rolling out LEZs at the national level, Mr Dearnley said.

### **Transport**

Asked why the EU transport standards had not worked, Prof Kelly explained that factory tests were optimal conditions and had not included daily inefficiencies, such as traffic. New EU tests were needed and would have to be tested in the real world, he said.

Vehicles operated differently in different areas, Cllr Kemp added, noting that rubbish trucks stopped more frequently in urban areas than rural ones.

The UK had not supported the use of natural gas in transport as Los Angeles had, Mr Dearnley noted. Shipping was also an increasing problem, Prof Kelly added, stating that action would be needed at the EU level. California was leading on efforts to reduce shipping pollution, he commented.

Turning to aviation, Prof Kelly said transport to and from airports caused the greatest concern with respect to local air quality, not planes. Once planes were in flight, pollutants were dispersed so greatly around the globe, that it is not what the public are breathing in generally, he said.

The consultation for a third runway at Heathrow had been based on the understanding that vehicles were getting cleaner, the witnesses observed. However, since EU tests had been incorrectly set, this premise no longer applied.

Few of the 27 EU countries would meet the EU air quality standards due to a lack of technology, Prof Kelly said.

A shift away from diesel vehicles would be one option, Mr Grugeon said. He suggested amending the corporate vehicle tax and excise duty to discourage the use of diesel cars.

A memorandum of understanding on air pollution, driven at the national level, was needed to improve reporting measures, Cllr Kemp said.