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SASIG 2011/12 Meeting Dates

The forthcoming SASIG meeting in 2011/12 will be on:

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?pagelid=27909>.

Westminster Committees

Transport Select Committee Inquiry - Post Legislative Assessment of the Civil Aviation Act 2006

9 September 2011

The Transport Committee expects to hold an inquiry into aviation matters during 2012, when the Government publishes its sustainable framework for aviation for consultation.

The Committee published a call for written evidence on any aspects of the Government's Post Legislative Assessment of the Civil Aviation Act 2006, and is now considering the submissions.

Full details are at: <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/news/caa---new-inquiry/>

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House of Commons Questions

Burns, C. – Airport closures

5 September 2011

Conor Burns (Conservative Party; Bournemouth West): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport how many airports have closed in the last two years; whether he has estimated the number of airports at risk of closure; and if he will make a statement.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative; Aviation Minister): Coventry Airport temporarily closed in 2009, before reopening in 2010. I am aware of the announcement that Plymouth Airport is to close by the end of the year, following the cessation of passenger services. We recognise the important role that airports can play in local economies but closure plans are a commercial matter for the airport operator.

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Long, N - Air Passenger Duty (APD): impact on Northern Ireland

6 September 2011

Naomi Long (Alliance; Belfast East): The Chancellor will be aware that air passenger duty has a particular impact in Northern Ireland, particularly as it places pressure on business and discourages tourism. What action does he intend to take, and when, to ensure that we can maintain our links, particularly our transatlantic ones?

George Osborne (Conservative; Chancellor): I am very aware of the issue relating to the continental flight from Belfast to the eastern seaboard of the United States, and I have spoken to Northern Ireland's First Minister and Deputy First Minister about it. I can see that there is a particular challenge because of the proximity of the airport in Dublin, and the British embassy in Washington has also been very active in dealing with the company in the United States. I can assure the hon. Lady that we are on the case.

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Bruce, M – Protection of passengers from anti-competitive airline practices

6 September 2011

Malcolm Bruce (Liberal Democrats; Gordon): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport if he will include a passengers' rights framework within the Economic Regulation of Airports Bill for the purposes of protecting consumers at airports from anti-competitive airline practices; and if he will make a statement.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative; Aviation Minister): The proposed reforms to the framework for airport economic regulation would give the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) a primary duty to promote the interests of existing and future passengers. Under the new regime airports with substantial market power and for whom regulation adds real value would need a licence and CAA would have powers to impose conditions on these airports to promote passengers' interests.

The airline sector is generally very competitive. Like most other sectors in the UK economy, their prices and service quality are not regulated. Instead airlines are subject to UK and European competition law, which is enforced by the UK and European competition authorities.

There is also a range of existing legislation which aims to protect consumers in the airline sector, including the Denied Boarding Compensation Regulations and the Passengers with Reduced Mobility Regulations.

In addition, CAA has been consulting on the proposal to set up an aviation consumer advocate panel, which would provide independent advice to CAA on consumer issues. The Government are also consulting on a number of reforms to ensure that consumer advice, representation and enforcement, more generally, are delivered effectively and efficiently.

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Goldsmith, Z - Airports: connectivity between airports and the rail network

6 September 2011

Zac Goldsmith (Conservative Party; Richmond Park): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what steps his Department has taken to improve inter-modal connectivity between airports and the rail network.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative; Aviation Minister): The Government recognises the importance of good surface access transport links to airports and the crucial role the public sector must play in their delivery.

The Government are pressing ahead with major rail improvement schemes including Crossrail, Thameslink and the tube upgrades. A consultation has also recently closed on high-speed rail. These projects are expected to benefit passengers travelling to some of our busiest airports, including Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and Birmingham.

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Goldsmith, Z. – Government policy on Civil Aviation Authority's proposed Future Airspace Strategy

6 September 2011

Zac Goldsmith (Conservative Party; Richmond Park): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his policy is on the Civil Aviation Authority's proposed Future Airspace Strategy for the UK 2011 to 2030.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative; Aviation Minister): The Government support the development of the Civil Aviation Authority's Future Airspace Strategy.

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Brine, S. - Transparency in the sale of air fares

6 September 2011

Steve Brine (Conservative; Winchester): To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether he has any plans to bring forward legislative proposals to vest the Civil Aviation Authority and Office of Fair Trading with powers to enforce Article 23 of EC Regulation 1008/2008.

Theresa Villiers (Conservative; Aviation Minister): We intend to introduce regulations to that effect later this year. Until they are in place, the Civil Aviation Authority is able to use its enforcement powers under the Consumer Protection from Unfair Trading Regulations 2008 to ensure greater transparency in the sale of air fares.

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Bain, W - Carbon emissions

14 September 2011

William Bain (Labour; Glasgow North East): To ask the Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change what representations he has received from the business and finance sectors on the contribution of further large-scale investments in energy infrastructure to meet the carbon reduction targets contained in the fourth carbon budget.

Gregory Barker (Conservative; Energy and Climate Change Minister): The Climate Change Act 2008 does not legally require the Government to formally consult businesses and finance sectors on how to meet carbon reduction targets. We have undertaken extensive consultation with stakeholders to develop our proposals for the Electricity Market Reform, which will enable the investment in low carbon electricity infrastructure needed to deliver our carbon reduction targets. Our proposals are set out in 'Planning our Electric Future: a White Paper for Secure, Affordable and Low-Carbon Electricity':

http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/legislation/white_papers/emr_wp_2011/emr_wp_2011.aspx published in July 2011.

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House of Lords Questions

Soley - Heathrow Airport: additional landing rights

5 September 2011

Lord Soley, Backbencher (Labour Party): To ask Her Majesty's Government, further to the Written Answer by Earl Attlee on 19 July (HL11133), whether discussions have taken place about the ability of Heathrow Airport to provide additional landing rights.

Lord Shutt of Greetland (Lib. Dem.; Deputy Chief Whip; Transport Spokesperson): The Coalition Government have made clear that they will not support a third runway at Heathrow Airport. Movements at Heathrow Airport are capped at 480,000 per year. Within this cap, the allocation of slots is governed by EC Regulation 95/93 (as amended by 793/2004) on the allocation of take-off and landing slots at congested community airports.

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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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