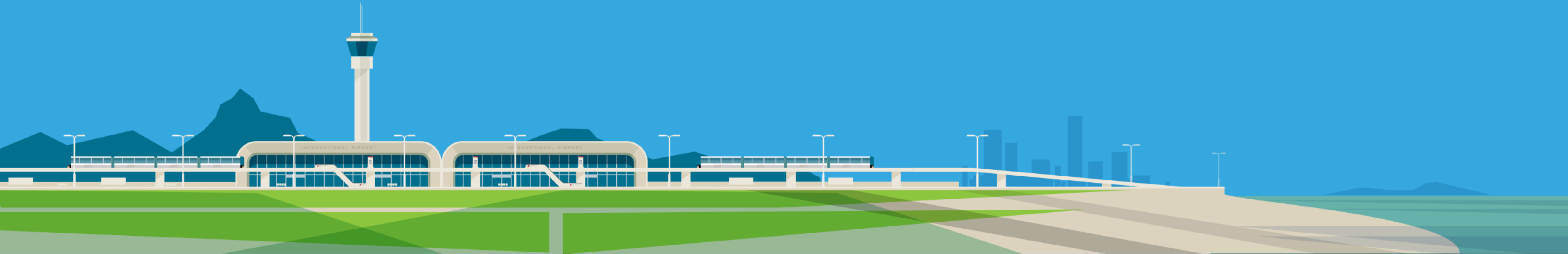
SASIG meeting: Local authorities, UK aviation and the CAA

25th February 2026



UK aviation: current context

- **UK aviation sector:**
  - UK aviation and aerospace remain in the top tier of global aviation and aerospace sectors – a competitive global sector that is also subject to global events too
  - 302 million UK passengers in 2025 – largest on record and near record cargo levels (2.7m tonnes)
  - Further growth in passengers expected in 2026
  - Some parts of the UK regional airport and airline market is facing has some viability challenges
- **Economic growth**
  - UK Government growth priority – agile regulation, reduced administration burden for regulated sectors
  - Airport expansion: Heathrow, Gatwick, Luton
  - New sub-sectors: drones, air taxis, space
  - Other new technologies such as AI, quantum…
- **Modernising aviation infrastructure** – especially airspace
- **Sustainability:**
  - Net Zero 2050 – largely via sustainable aviation fuels (SAF), greenhouse gas removals and hydrogen
  - Noise – local community sensitivity to aviation noise
  - Climate Adaptation

UK CAA: Protecting People, Enabling Aerospace

UK Civil Aviation Authority

- **UK's statutory aviation regulator**
  - overseeing global and domestic aviation standards set out in law (1982 Civil Aviation Act, 2000 Transport Act, 2012 Civil Aviation Act, 2021 Space Industry Act, Assimilated EU legislation)

- **With that statutory framework and broad policy framework set by Government, CAA's core regulatory role is:**
  - Aviation safety (implementing ICAO global standards): licencing airlines, airports, air traffic and personnel
  - Security: oversight of airport security and sector cyber security
  - Airspace regulation: planning inspector for the skies
  - Economic regulation: of Heathrow, Gatwick and NATS
  - Consumer protection: running the ATOL package holiday scheme and enforcing application of consumer law
  - Environmental performance reporting for aviation
  - And on all these matters, sets technical guidance and makes recommendations to Government for law changes

- Alongside this core role, our **enabling role** is about anticipating changes to the sector (eg drones, air taxis, AI, quantum, etc) and creating regulatory frameworks that match the pace of technology developments so regulation isn't un-necessarily a barrier to development

- **CAA is governed by a Board appointed by the Secretary of State**, has c1750 employees and £205m revenue in 2024/25 (derived from statutory charges on those we regulate, Government grants, airspace charges and third party revenue)

UK
Civil Aviation
Authority

Aviation and local authorities

- **130 UK aerodromes –** safety and security oversight by the CAA, many local authority owned.

- **Air Displays** – c100 planned displays in 2026. Local authorities, police and CAA have key roles, incl safety.

- **Airspace Modernisation**:
  - Planning decisions are where key choices are made – in some cases within the Airports National Policy Statement. Government will consult later this year on potential changes
  - Government has consulted on changes to the policy framework applying to airspace – including noise and carbon framework and priorities
  - CAA has consulted on its changes to its process for making airspace changes
  - Final versions of the policy and process are expected to be published in summer 2026

- **New technologies**:
  - Drones – operators looking to scale beyond visual line of sight operations (eg emergency services, parcel deliveries).
  - Air taxis – potential new ports
  - Space – new spaceports (mainly north Scotland and Cornwall)

- **Engagement mechanisms on these** areas – eg consultations, issue specific meetings, engagement fora (eg airspace)