

**Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG)
Annual Report to LGA Leadership Board**

SIG Name:	Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG)
Lead Member:	Keith Artus (Chairman)
Lead Officer:	SASIG Secretariat c/o Northpoint Aviation Services

Email:	secretariat@sasig.org.uk
Address:	SASIG Secretariat, c/o Northpoint Aviation London & South East Office, 4, Beacon Avenue, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4QL
Telephone:	01732 220256
Website:	www.sasig.org.uk



Advancing sustainable aviation policy on behalf of local communities.

Membership: 01/04/2025 - 31/03/2026

Cornwall Council	London Borough of Hounslow
Crawley Borough Council	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
City of Doncaster Council	Reigate & Banstead Borough Council
East Hertfordshire District Council	Rushmoor Borough Council
Essex County Council	Southend-on-Sea City Council
Fareham Borough Council	Slough Borough Council
Hertfordshire County Council	Spelthorne Borough Council
Isles of Scilly Council	Uttlesford District Council
London Borough of Hillingdon	London Borough of Wandsworth

Affiliated

London Borough of Merton
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

SASIG represents approximately 10 million people which equates to 15% of the population in the LGA's combined area. Airports covered by Member Authorities handled 75% of air passengers in England in 2019 and 65% in the UK overall.

Aims

SASIG's objectives are:

- to promote the need for long-term, sustainable aviation policies that lead to a reduction in the environmental impact of aviation whilst securing appropriate social and economic benefits;
- to increase understanding of the local and global impacts of aviation on the environment and communities;
- to identify and promote the changes needed to move towards sustainable aviation practices within the industry and Government; and
- to work with other organisations and the Government on the formulation of policy advice.

SASIG Policy Principles

- i. To give the people of the UK the social and business opportunities to travel from their nearest airport where feasible.
- ii. To capture, not stifle, the social and economic benefits of aviation using robust and objective evidence.
- iii. To direct aviation growth to locations where it will assist sustainable economic regeneration.
- iv. To minimise adverse impacts – social, economic and environmental – by protecting people and non-transferable habitats.
- v. To ensure that the air transport sector rather than local communities pays the full costs of the impact of all air journeys.
- vi. To offer the aviation industry tough but realistic parameters based upon associated impacts around which to secure growth.
- vii. To ensure that good quality surface access links are provided to airports, particularly public transport links that create integrated transport hubs.
- viii. To promote better point to point air services from regional airports, with sensitive control over all impacts.
- ix. To work with Government and other bodies to ensure that noise impacts as a result of airport growth, airspace changes and flight path changes on local communities are minimised and mitigated.
- x. To support the coordination and integration of the full spectrum of national policies on issues relating to aviation. This must accord with international and regional policy-making and implementation.
- xi. To promote investigation of the impacts of the air freight industry, supporting the development of air freight infrastructure where it is the most appropriate mode.
- xii. To encourage Governments and the aviation industry to make greater efforts to reduce aviation's impacts on climate change.
- xiii. To instigate and design, in collaboration with external partners, innovative policies and methodologies for identifying, measuring and addressing effectively the noise, health, social infrastructure and wider strategic planning impacts of airport development.

SASIG strongly supports the Government's work towards a national aviation policy that:

- Is based on the need to control the impacts rather than the aviation activity.
- Has considered in detail all options for providing capacity to meet forecast demand, and for providing for other, lower levels of demand.
- Embraces the concept of integrated transport provision.

- Audits the parameters that should be used in any forecasts of future demand.
- Adopts an assessment process for aviation developments that explicitly includes all associated costs.
- Sets effective environmental limits for the aviation industry to meet, taking the appropriate form – regulation, charges, taxes, etc.
- Considers and mitigates against the impact of greenhouse gas emissions.
- Develops the economic analysis of aviation, and in particular improves valuation of the net impact – benefits and disbenefits.
- Coordinates with other transport policies and with other associated national policies, such as climate change, and energy policies.

Key Activities / Outcomes of work undertaken.

Key Achievements 2025–26

SASIG's standing as the authoritative local authority voice on civil aviation policy was further cemented this year through consistent, high-level engagement across Government and its key agencies. The Group maintained its seat at the table on the DfT's Airspace Modernisation Stakeholder Engagement Group, ensuring that the interests of member councils remained visible and influential in shaping one of the most consequential long-term infrastructure programmes facing UK aviation. Attendance at all three meetings of the DfT's Airspace and Noise Engagement Group (ANEG) and active participation in the CAA's Environmental Policy Forum and Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team (CAST) reflected SASIG's determination to be present wherever policy affecting local communities is being formed. The Policy Director's place on the Future of Flight Government Liaison Group, and the briefing and advice provided to the LGA's own representative on that body, ensured that member authority perspectives were fed directly into Government thinking on emerging aviation technologies.

A highlight of the year was the successful completion and presentation to Government of the joint SASIG-CAA -ITC study, written by SASIG's Policy Director on the future policy challenges associated with emergent aviation technologies over the next 30 years. This substantive piece of research, co-sponsored by SASIG, directly positions member authorities as forward-thinking contributors to national aviation strategy rather than passive respondents to it. Alongside this, the SASIG Drone Bureau – established in 2024 with LGA support – continued to grow in profile, offering members practical, expert-informed guidance on Advanced Air Mobility at a time when the regulatory and planning landscape for drone operations is still being defined. Together, these initiatives represent meaningful contributions to evidence-led policy and demonstrate SASIG's capacity to help shape, not merely comment on, the direction of UK aviation.

In terms of membership, governance and value, SASIG continued to demonstrate the durability of its model. With subscriptions held at 2015–16 levels for a tenth consecutive year, the Group offers exceptional value while maintaining the financial discipline introduced under revised protocols in 2023. The breadth of SASIG's reach – representing approximately 10 million people and councils whose airports serve 75% of air passengers in England – reinforces the weight that Government and regulators attach to its representations. The monthly Bulletin, bilateral engagement with individual member councils and a programme of guest speakers at membership meetings which included the CAA's Director for Communications, Policy and Strategy – collectively ensured that members remained well-informed, well-connected and well-served throughout the year.

National Representation

With now nearly 30 years history as an LGA Special Interest Group, SASIG is recognised and respected by the likes of DfT, DEFRA, MHCLG and other Government Departments - as well as key regulators and agencies (the CAA, Environment Agency, Border Force, UKRI etc) for its relevant and valued experience, knowledge, collaborative approach to engagement and consultation. It remains a sounding board through which Whitehall, regulators, the industry and other stakeholders can understand local authority views on generic policy and other issues related to the aviation sector in the UK. The Group's resultant involvement in nationally important policy

forums, programme of guest speakers and access to key decision-makers and policy influencers, allows it to engage productively with a full range of stakeholders on aviation policy.

Engagement with Whitehall Departments, CAA, CAST, ANEG and Aviation Minister

- SASIG continues to be recognised as an important ‘strategic stakeholder’ by DfT with its views actively sought on issues relevant to local authority interest in airports. Among the topics SASIG discussed with departmental officials within the period of this report were long-term passenger demand, airport capacity, the need for a UK air freight strategy, new technology, airspace modernisation, economic benefits and planning issues relating to airport expansion and the sector’s continuing post-pandemic recovery.
- SASIG Chairman continues to represent local authorities on the board of the DfT’s Airspace Modernisation Stakeholder Engagement Group although the SASIG Policy Director deputised for him at the latest meeting held in June 2025.
- SASIG is a long-standing member of the DfT’s Airspace & Noise Engagement Group (ANEG). Three meetings were held in this period and SASIG attended all of them.
- SASIG’s profile in Advanced Air Mobility has continued to rise offering valuable experience and knowledge to members in the form of their own Drone Bureau, established in 2024 with full support from LGA.
- The Policy Director also sits on the Future of Flight Government Liaison Group and has offered industry briefing and policy advice to the LGA’s representative on the FFLG.
- The Policy Director is a member of CAAs Environment Information Forum and also attended a CAA webinar looking at proposed changes to the Air Navigation Directions and Air Navigation Guidance, held in January and attended a CAA engagement session regarding the UK Airspace Design Service in July 2025.
- SASIG regularly attends the CAA’s Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team (CAST) which was formed in January 2021 to co-ordinate future work and good practice. There was only one meeting in this period which was in August 2025.
- The CAA continues to seek SASIG’s views on other areas of its work programme including noise impacts. A CAA Noise Action Plan meeting which SASIG attended, was held in June.
- SASIG also sits on the CAA’s Environmental Policy Forum and attended meetings in July and November 2025.
- SASIG meets regularly with relevant officials from different Whitehall departments to make representations and promote co-operation with Government officials. The Chairman/Policy Director have approached the current Aviation Minister for a meeting.

Engagement with Other Stakeholders

- SASIG’s Secretariat continues to liaise with other prominent industry stakeholder groups including AOA, RABA, LEP Network, COSLA, BEIS, Key Cities, Aviation Environment Federation, National Planning Inspectorate and HSPG to name but a few. SASIG maintains links with other industry stakeholders including Connected Places Catapult, Oxford University, University of Surrey and with Innovate UK and their Future Flight Programme.
- SASIG completed its work alongside Regional & Business Airports Group (RABA) and the Independent Transport Commission (ITC) on a study looking at future policy challenges likely to be associated with emergent aviation technologies over the next 30 years. This report has been presented to government transport officials.

Conferences and Public Fora

As a result of changed work patterns arising from the pandemic, meetings (including our own members’ meetings) are often – though not always - on a virtual basis. SASIG has, this past year, received many invites to events organised by, amongst others, colleagues at DfT, CAA and HSPG.

SASIG Bulletin

This is a core service emailed monthly by the SASIG Secretariat to members. It contains: editorial; an events diary; ‘Monthly Highlights’ section; Parliamentary Q & As on aviation matters; news articles from the month covering Parliamentary News, Government News, Regional News, National and Other Industry News and European News and updates to the SASIG website (publications/ industry documents, etc). It provides a valuable resource, allowing Local Authorities to remain well-informed and take an active role in the aviation debate.

Appendices:

- **SASIG Mission Statement**
- **SASIG Terms of Reference**
- **Annual Membership Subscriptions**
- **SASIG Meetings Held**

SASIG Mission Statement

SASIG proactively contributes to ensure that UK aviation policy is implemented in a manner that reconciles economic, social and environmental issues. Advancing sustainable aviation policy on behalf of local communities.

SASIG Terms of Reference

1. The Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG) shall provide the forum within the Local Government Association (LGA) for all local authorities to discuss strategic aviation policies and major aviation issues and advancing sustainable aviation policy on behalf of local communities.

2. SASIG will contribute to the work of the LGA in responding to Government and the European Commission on all aviation issues that have a strategic planning, transportation, land use, economic or environmental health dimension. SASIG, where appropriate, will work through and in conjunction with the LGA. SASIG will make representations direct to Government and elsewhere arising directly from the SIG's special interest. SASIG shall not act in a way that conflicts with or undermines LGA policy as a whole or damages the interests of member authorities.

3. SASIG will develop its role and pursue its objectives in accordance with an annual work programme, which will be kept under review so as to ensure consistency with LGA policy and meet with the aspirations of a wider membership.

4. SASIG will operate under the following constitution:

(i) Each authority in membership is entitled to designate one Member and/or one officer to attend each meeting of the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group.

(ii) Whilst the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group will seek to work by amicable agreement amongst the authorities, the formal position is that only one person from each member authority is entitled to vote.

(iii) There is no objection to additional Members and officers attending meetings to observe and speak with the permission of the Chairman.

(iv) A Chair's Advisory Group and a Technical Officers Group, with representatives drawn from around airport locations on the Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group, will be maintained to assist in taking initiatives forward but with no specific executive powers unless so authorised or at times when urgency dictates that responses must be made between meetings.

(v) A Chair and up to three Vice Chairs will be elected annually to ensure a broad geographical spread of interest.

(vi) The role of Honorary President and Vice Presidents may be filled by an appropriate person(s).

(vii) The Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group shall submit an annual report to the LGA and shall table other reports for LGA meetings as and when necessary.

(viii) The Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group shall set an annual subscription rate for membership based on an assessment of its likely annual expenditure on staff, consultants, printing/publicity and other costs. These costs will be apportioned between member authorities on a formula to be agreed.

(ix) Authorities joining SASIG in any quarter of the financial year shall pay the relevant proportion of the annual subscription.

(x) Authorities shall be advised of the forthcoming subscriptions each autumn for their approval. The absence of a response to the contrary indicates approval.

(xi) Authorities resigning from SASIG shall give notice in writing prior to the end of the financial year.

Annual Membership Subscriptions

SASIG keeps its working methods and subscriptions under continuous review with the aim of keeping the subscription for its members at the lowest practical level. One effect is the current subscriptions remain unchanged since 2015/16. From April 2023 the Group's finances began to be managed under new financial protocols agreed with the membership, which placed governance relating to the approval, monitoring, direction and accounting for the collection and expenditure of SASIGs budget with the Chairman and the Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG).

SASIG Membership Meetings

Dates held – 25 June and 15 October 2025 and 25 February 2026 (all virtual)

SASIG held 3 meetings across this period (all virtual) for the full membership including councillors, officers and invited guests. Members have been regularly updated on SASIG's work including its own LA Impact Study originating as a result of the pandemic and also a report on the challenges facing the aviation sector and what new technologies can contribute to dealing with them. This report (published 17 November 2025) was co-sponsored by SASIG in conjunction with the CAA and led by the Independent Transport Commission (ITC). Other areas of discussion included the modernisation of UK airspace, noise action plans, airport expansion and future airport capacity. Agendas at these meetings also placed a focus on SASIG's interest in the various consultations related to these issues. Other items covered at the member meetings included discussions on the reform of the NPPF, the airport National Policy Statement and the need for an Air Freight Strategy. The Groups' profile, funding and membership continue to be other regular topics.

Guest speaker at the June 2025 meeting was James Arnott, Commercial Director at Plowman Craven who gave a presentation: 'Adopting Drone Technology in Local Government'. Due to a full agenda, there was no room for a guest speaker at the October 2025 meeting, but the February 2026 meeting saw our guest speaker being Tim Johnson, Director for Communications, Policy and Strategy at the CAA. Tim gave an interesting talk on local authorities' relationship to UK aviation and the CAA. All our guests' presentations may be seen in the members' area on the website.

SASIG Members' Issue Specific Workshops

SASIG regularly considers whether to hold issue specific workshops reflecting key areas of policy likely to be of interest to members and actively encourages representatives and colleagues from within the aviation industry (such as DfT, CAA, AOA, AEF, DEFRA and HSPG along with non-members), to participate alongside our member authorities. These workshops used to form part of the main meeting but with meetings continuing to be held virtually, the decision was taken to hold any such workshops separately in the future. In addition to these meetings the Chairman and Policy Director regularly schedule bilateral meetings with Member Authorities to understand the specific issues which are of most concern to them.

SASIG Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG)

Dates held – 5 June and 18 September 2025 and 20 January 2026

The SASIG Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG) meets approximately 3-4 weeks prior to formal SASIG meetings, with additional meetings called to discuss specific topics as required. CAG has supported the Group with consideration of overarching issues, and review/comment on agenda papers for full SASIG meetings, including formal responses to consultations.