

Special Interest Group annual report to LGA Board

SIG Name	Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG)
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Advancing sustainable aviation policy on behalf of local communities.

Membership: 01/04/2025 - 31/03/2026	
<p>Cornwall Council Crawley Borough Council City of Doncaster Council East Hertfordshire District Council Essex County Council Fareham Borough Council Hertfordshire County Council Isles of Scilly Council London Borough of Hillingdon</p>	<p>London Borough of Hounslow London Borough of Richmond upon Thames Reigate & Banstead Borough Council Rushmoor Borough Council Southend-on-Sea City Council Slough Borough Council Spelthorne Borough Council Uttlesford District Council London Borough Wandsworth</p>
Affiliated	
<p>London Borough of Merton Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council Sheffield Metropolitan Borough Council Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council</p>	
<p>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.</p>	
Aims: SASIG's Core Objectives are:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 arising from 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.

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 strongly supports 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

Achievements 2025–26

SASIG's influence on aviation policy was advanced on multiple fronts during 2025–26. The Group maintained active representation on the DfT's Airspace Modernisation Stakeholder Engagement Group, attended all three meetings of the Airspace and Noise Engagement Group (ANEG) and participated in the CAA's Environmental Policy Forum and Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team – ensuring member authority perspectives were embedded in the forums shaping UK airspace policy. The Policy Director's seat on the Future of Flight Government Liaison Group and the briefing provided to the LGA's own representative on that body further extended SASIG's reach into emerging aviation technology policy. The completion and presentation to Government of the joint SASIG–RABA–ITC study on long-term challenges associated with emergent aviation technologies marked a significant contribution to evidence-led national strategy, positioning member authorities as active participants in shaping – rather than simply responding to – the UK's aviation future.

Member value and governance were also consolidated. Subscriptions held at 2015–16 levels for a tenth successive year underline SASIG's commitment to cost discipline, while the financial governance reforms introduced in 2023 continue to strengthen accountability. The growing SASIG Drone Bureau – established with LGA support – provided members with timely expertise on Advanced Air Mobility. The monthly Bulletin, targeted bilateral engagement with member councils, and high-quality guest speakers – including the CAA's Director for Communications, Policy and Strategy at the February 2026 meeting – ensured that SASIG's 21 member authorities remained well-informed and well-connected throughout the year.

National Representation

With now nearly 30 years in existence 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 debates.

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 by offering valuable experience and expertise to members in the form of their own Drone Bureau, established in 2024 with 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 CAA's Environment Information Forum and attended a CAA webinar looking at proposed changes to the Air Navigation Directions and Air Navigation Guidance, held in January. He also attended a CAA engagement event on 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 sits on the CAA's Environmental Policy Forum; we 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 latest Aviation Minister for a meeting in the near future.

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 informed and take an active role in the aviation debate.