



CPRE Sussex Policy Position Statement

AVIATION

Section 1

The scope of the problem

Air travel in the UK has trebled in the last 25 years and is forecast to grow at 4-5% annually. UK passenger numbers are predicted by Government to more than double from 180 million to 500 million by 2030. To cope with this growing demand, additional runways, terminals and roads would be needed. These predictions are being strongly opposed by local residents and environmental groups because the associated developments would have disastrous consequences for the countryside. Furthermore, they would require extra aircraft holding stacks and new flight paths over rural areas. Previously tranquil areas would suffer unacceptable levels of intrusion with more than 600,000 additional people affected by noise pollution.

Aviation is now the UK's fastest growing source of CO² emissions and as such a significant contributor to climate change. It is therefore essential that measures are taken to restrict the growth in aviation to levels which can be accommodated within upgraded existing facilities.

Section 2

Central Government Planning Policy

The Government's Air Transport White Paper of 2003 predicted and supported a huge growth in air travel in the coming decades which would require the expansion of several UK airports with several new runways and terminals. Alistair Darling has stated... "We need to plan ahead so we can continue to benefit from the economic and social advantages of air transport.

Section 3

CPRE Sussex Policy Statement

- CPRE Sussex believes that the government should develop policies to manage the growth of the aviation industry in order to protect the environment.
- CPRE Sussex believes that air travel has a role to play as part of an integrated transport system which brings economic benefit. Policies for its development should be governed by the same principles that apply to road and rail transport, which recognise the need to manage the demand for travel in line with the need for constraint when it comes to environmental damage.
- CPRE Sussex believes that Government policies for aviation travel should be environmentally sustainable. This should reflect the rapidly increasing impact of aviation travel on air pollution and environmental damage, loss of tranquillity and increased traffic on roads leading to airports.
- CPRE Sussex objects to the principle of "*predict and provide*" as shown in the Air Transport Paper of 2003, since this fails to take into account the effects of the rising costs of fuel, the international awareness of the rapidly increasing damage caused by air pollution and the congestion of transportation links to airports.
- CPRE Sussex endorses the statement by the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution in 2002 that: "if no limiting action is taken, rapid growth in air transport will proceed in fundamental contradiction to the Government-stated goal of sustainable development".
- CPRE Sussex believes that the "unique contribution" that the aviation industry asserts it makes to the economy of the UK is significantly overstated. The majority of seats leaving Gatwick are filled with holidaymakers, not businessmen, so there is a net exportation of leisure expenditure when compared with incoming investment.
- CPRE Sussex believes air passenger duty should be raised annually in line with inflation and that global air transport should not be singled out for tax advantages and therefore that VAT should be applied to aviation fuel, tickets and aircraft, initially within Europe but, eventually, worldwide.

Were these to be applied, the demand for air travel would be reduced. Passengers should pay a fair contribution towards the environmental damage they are cause. The proposed expansion of Gatwick, within its existing boundaries and on its single runway, would double its capacity, thus making a second runway unnecessary.

- CPRE Sussex supports the principle of carbon emission trading within the EU, but believes that this is not the long-term solution to environmental damage caused by aviation. If the Government predictions of aviation growth prove to be anywhere near correct, then emissions trading to compensate for aviation would eat up the savings from all other sources, so negating them.
- CPRE Sussex believes that the Government should commission research to examine the impact of aviation noise on people living in rural areas. There should be an extension of the restrictions on the most intrusive night time flights. We believe that the government should adopt the WHO's internationally recognised standards on noise for assessing the effect on people and their quality of life. The maps showing noise levels around airports should be regularly updated so they include the 50 decibel contours.
- CPRE considers that with oil prices rising as demand increases from emerging economies, such as India and China, the supply-side will be under pressure and there will be increasing recognition that supply is finite. This may well take twenty to thirty years, but that is the same period covered by the Government's predict and provide policy. So we would have built the additional airports just in time for a rapid decline in air travel caused by restrictions in the availability of suitable fuel.
- CPRE encourages the introduction of technological improvements to reduce the environmental damage caused by air travel
- CPRE Sussex supports the promotion of an integrated transport policy as an alternative to short haul flights- e.g. the high speed train.
- CPRE Sussex encourages the reduction in food miles as this will lead to a reduction in cargo flights

Section 4 CPRE Branch contact

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Section 5 What can you do?"

Further reading:

CPRE Aviation Policy – Jan 2006
CPRE – Flying to distraction. This summarises the findings of Aviation, noise and the Countryside June 2003
CPRE – The future Development of Air Transport in the UK -2003.
CPRE – Expanding airports destroy the countryside leaflet 2003
Department of Transport Air Transport White Paper 2003
Institute of Public Policy Resources – The Sky's the Limit 2003

If you are concerned by the impacts of airports and air travel on the countryside you can:

- Contact your MP to express your concerns and press for more concerted action to reduce the environmental damage caused by air travel.
- Contact your CPRE branch or national office to find out if any airport expansion plans in your local area and support local campaigns.
- If aircraft noise is a particular problem in your area, consider joining local community groups to keep a log of disturbances to use for discussions with local airport authority and local authorities.

To make a direct impact ask yourself the question "Do I need to travel?"

- Consider using rail or road transport rather than air transport...
- Consider taking holidays in the UK rather than abroad to reduce your air miles.
- For business purposes consider using video links and e mails.
- If using air transport, make a financial contribution to a Carbon offset trust.