

## **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](mailto:secretariat@sasig.org.uk)

**Address:** SASIG Secretariat, c/o Northpoint Aviation London & South East Office, 14, Monarch Terrace, Kings Hill, West Malling, Kent, ME19 4NP

**Telephone:** 01732 220256

**Website:** [www.sasig.org.uk](http://www.sasig.org.uk)

### **Advancing sustainable aviation policy on behalf of local communities.**

**Membership: 01/04/2020 - 31/03/2021**

Broadland District Council

Rushmoor Borough Council

Cornwall Council

Slough Borough Council

Crawley Borough Council

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Spelthorne Borough Council

East Hertfordshire District Council

Uttlesford District Council

Essex County Council

West Midlands Airport Shareholders

Hampshire County Council

Committee comprising of:

Hertfordshire County Council

- Birmingham City Council

Isles of Scilly Council

- Coventry City Council

London Borough of Hillingdon

- Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council

London Borough of Hounslow

- Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

Luton Borough Council

- Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Plymouth City Council

- Wolverhampton City Council

Reigate & Banstead Borough Council

Wokingham Borough Council

Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead

SASIG represents approximately 12 million people which equates to 20% of the LGA area. Airports covered by Member Authorities handled 75% of air passengers in England in 2019 and 65% in the UK overall.

## **Aim**

### **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 new 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.**

**National Representation:** The ways in which SASIG is represented publicly emphasises the national nature of the membership and thus the sphere of interest. This has included:

### **Department for Transport, CAA & ICCAN and Aviation Minister**

- SASIG continues to be recognised as an important 'strategic stakeholder' by DfT and its views are actively sought during consultations of which there have been many over the past year.
- Evidence of this is shown by the SASIG Chairman representing local authorities on the board of the DfT's Airspace Strategy Board chaired by the Aviation Minister. Due to the pandemic the only meeting in this period was held in March of this year which our Chairman attended. The date of the next meeting is still to be confirmed.
- SASIG is a regular attendee at the DfT's Airspace & Noise Engagement Group (ANEG). The previous meetings in this period were held in July and December 2020 and April 2021 all of which SASIG attended.
- The Policy Director sits on the Future of Flight Government Liaison Group.

- SASIG has also been holding regular liaison meetings (approx. bi-monthly) with the DfT since May 2020 to discuss the development of the Department's Aviation Recovery Plan and how SASIG can feed into its development.
- The CAA continues to seek SASIG's views on its programme of work including how decisions on airspace change should be made and also looking at the development of aviation forecasts.
- SASIG is also working alongside the CAA as a member of the Combined Aerodrome Safeguarding Team (CAST) formed in January 2021 to co-ordinate future work and good practice. Their focus groups include ones for Regulation & Legislation, Technical and also Safeguarding Training.
- SASIG has regular liaison with the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN) set up in 2018. ICCAN has presented at and also attended SASIG members' meetings.
- SASIG regularly meets with the Aviation Minister to highlight its work and promote future mutual co-operation with Government officials. SASIG met the current Minister Robert Courts in January 2021.

#### **Engagement with Other Stakeholders**

- SASIG's Secretariat continues to liaise with other prominent stakeholder groups including the AOA, RABA, LEP Network, COSLA, BEIS, Key Cities, Sustainable Aviation, Aviation Environment Federation, National Planning Inspectorate, HSPG and the Gatwick Airport Conservation Campaign.  
In December 2020, SASIG Chairman and SASIG Policy Director met with Cllr David Renard in his capacity as Chair of the LGA's Economy, Environment, Housing and Transport Board.
- From June 2020, SASIG has been having regular engagement with the UKRI Innovate UK, Future Flight Programme including attending their initial steering group meetings. Their representative has, in turn, attended and presented at SASIG meetings over this period.
- From October 2020, SASIG has also been liaising with Connected Places Catapult regarding future collaborative work.
- Since December 2020, SASIG has been working 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.

#### **Conferences and Public Fora**

- Since March of 2020, the pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have significantly affected the number of conferences and seminars usually available to the industry and SASIG has therefore concentrated more on internal meetings and workshops. SASIG looks forward to the industry opening up to more opportunities over the next 12 months.

#### **SASIG Newsletter**

This is a core service emailed monthly by the SASIG Secretariat to members. It contains: editorial; an events diary; 'Monthly Highlights' section; Parliamentary Q & A's 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.

**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.
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 Chairman'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 Chairman and up to three Vice Chairmen 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**

The Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group will keep its working methods and subscriptions under review with the aim of setting the subscription for all members at the lowest practical level. The current subscriptions have remained unchanged since 2015/16. Since April 2016 Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council have been providing financial management services to SASIG and ensure that all income and expenditure is controlled and audited within their normal practices and with the approval of the Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG) in accordance with the approved budget.

### **SASIG Membership Meetings**

**Dates held – 1 October & 16 December 2020 and 23 March 2021**

SASIG held its usual 3 meetings across the year (all virtual) for the full membership including councillors and officers, with much of the discussion revolving around the pandemic and its devastating impact on the aviation sector. Other issues discussed included the redesign of UK airspace, night noise restrictions, the (possible) Heathrow 3<sup>rd</sup> runway and the Government's Freeport scheme. Agendas at these meetings focused on SASIG's involvement in, and response to, the many consultations related to these issues. SASIG made a submission to the Freeports consultation in July 2020 and to the Planning for the Future consultation in October 2020 and intends to submit a response to the current Night Noise restrictions consultation.

Other items covered at the member meetings include the Groups' plans to raise SASIG's profile and membership, the EU position on State Aid and other post-Brexit aviation-related matters, the Government's decarbonization strategy and airport safeguarding. Guest speaker at the October 2020 meeting was Zoey McLernon from Logistics UK. Tony Heap, CAA was the guest speaker in December and in March this year our own Policy Director Chris Cain spoke to members about collaborative work being undertaken with ITC and also the SASIG Local Authority Impact Study currently being developed.

## **SASIG Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG)**

### **Dates held – 23 June & 19 November 2020 and 4 March 2021**

The SASIG Chairman's Advisory Group (CAG) meets 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.

## **SASIG Issue Specific Workshops**

In 2016-17 three Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were established to look at key themes of interest to SASIG's membership: Surface Access; Environment, Planning and Airspace; and Airports, Cities and Economic Growth. Their function was to develop policy positions for presentation to the SASIG membership for approval and inclusion in SASIG led consultation responses. Since April 2018, the TWGs have been suspended and replaced by issue specific Working Groups reflecting key areas of policy likely to be included in the final Aviation White Paper and/or the Aviation Recovery Plan. These workshops have been held following each main members' meeting.

On 1 October 2020 the workshop topic was the implications for local authorities from future aviation technologies with guest speakers from UKRI Innovate and Northpoint Aviation. The workshop on 16 December 2020 focused on the Government's consultation on night flight restrictions and the ICCAN consultation on the emerging view on the future of aviation noise management. Finally, on 23 March 2021 there was a small informal workshop following the main meeting, concentrating on aviation capacity in the south-east.

Representatives from DfT, CAA, AOA, MHCLG, DEFRA, Transport Scotland, HSPG, SESTRAN and many non-member authorities have been among those who were invited to join SASIG members during these workshops and who took up the offer.