



2020 ANNUAL REPORT

COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on people and livelihoods throughout the world. In an AEF context, the first lockdown in March 2020 raised many questions, not only about the long-term consequences for aviation, but about the continuation of policy discussions and our work plan.

While some things had to change – we closed the office with staff working from home for the rest of the year – we were thankful to have had the assurances of funding so we could keep staff employed without having to furlough. And because everyone embraced online meetings (even United Nations working groups), the work programme remained unaffected too, while it even expanded in some areas as airports' appetite to progress their expansion plans seemed unaffected by the absence of planes on their runways.

New issues have been added to our agenda, with a public debate about the extent to which the Government should help the industry financially, and how an industry recovery could be tied to climate and noise objectives for the sector, building on 2019's momentum that had seen global climate protests, declarations of a climate emergency and the introduction of net zero legislation.

Looking ahead to 2021, we expect to see several key policy documents that will shape the industry's future, especially the Government's Transport Decarbonisation Plan, a consultation on net zero aviation, and an Aviation Recovery Plan which is expected to replace the aviation strategy green paper. And with the airspace modernisation process anticipated to resume in some form, noise policy issues are likely to receive more attention.

Read on to find out more about some of our 2020 activities, including a Zoom meeting with the Prime Minister.

1. OUTREACH

In 2020, the highly negative impacts of COVID-19 were unavoidable and saddening, but it was also the case that some people were experiencing significant improvements in the quality of their lives. Several members contacted us to say that lockdown restrictions and the resultant reduction in aviation noise meant that, for the first time in years, they could enjoy their gardens and sleep well at night. They sent us footage of their experiences of "heavenly" peace and quiet, and reported much-improved feelings of wellbeing.

However, the experience of lockdown for other communities was strikingly different, especially where airports were operating cargo flights. Campaigners in Southend, for example, sent in video recordings of "ridiculous" levels of noise coming from their airport's holding point, during both the day and night.

We edited the videos we received into short films and published them on Twitter as part of our campaign on the impacts of aviation noise. Throughout the year, we continued to provide advice and support on noise issues, and we helped to publicise the Aviation Communities Forum #NoNightFlights campaign.

In terms of research and stakeholder consultation, 2020 was a busy year for the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN). In the summer, it published its findings on aviation noise and public health. Disappointingly, ICCAN's report concluded that the evidence on the health effects of aviation noise ranged from 'very low' to 'moderate' quality, requiring the prioritisation of further research in relation to sleep, diabetes, wellbeing, depression and anxiety.

In October, ICCAN published the findings of its 'survey on people's experience of aviation noise during lockdown'. AEF invited members to send in questions relating to these reports which have been collated and will be put to ICCAN shortly.

AEF also participated in a survey and focus groups on ICCAN's future functions and role. Alongside the survey, ICCAN published its emerging view on aviation noise management.

2. NATIONAL CLIMATE POLICY WORK

By the start of 2020, despite the Government having legislated for the UK to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, it didn't seem to have any plan for how to deliver net zero aviation – a sector whose emissions were continuing to grow and in which no radical technology options were available. Meanwhile, another crisis was looming. The ongoing coronavirus pandemic has since caused the biggest shock to the aviation sector in history.

Despite this, climate change remained high on the agenda throughout the year. AEF's 2020 work included arguing for a focus on ensuring that aviation employees facing sudden job insecurity are treated fairly (calling for a transition to green jobs to be accelerated); collaborating with other green NGOs to set out how the Government should 'build back better' for aviation (including calling for aviation's inclusion in economy-wide emissions targets and increased aviation taxes); and highlighting the potential for less flying – and more domestic tourism – to be embedded in future habits and choices.

We've continued to engage with the Government over aviation and climate change, despite its recent preference for setting up discussion groups rather than developing policy. We have a seat on the Jet Zero Council (chaired by Grant Shapps and Alok Shama, with Boris Johnson attending the first meeting), which is focused on accelerating zero carbon technology for aviation. And we have also had input to the forthcoming Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

At the same time, we've been supporting local campaigners in highlighting the conflict between airport expansion plans (a surprising number of which are being pursued despite the huge Covid-related reductions in flight numbers) and national and local commitments to net zero emissions.

In 2021 the Government will need to respond to the far-reaching recommendations that the Committee on Climate Change made in December 2020, such as no 'net' increase in airport capacity, and the inclusion of international aviation emissions in carbon budgets. Maybe we'll finally get sight of the aviation climate policy we've been promised for over a year.

3. INTERNATIONAL POLICY WORK

AEF continued to represent the environmental NGO coalition, ICESA, at meetings of the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), participating in its working groups on developing a long-term climate goal and on ICAO's aviation carbon calculator, and taking part in its environmental steering group. While we remain strong advocates for the formal inclusion of international aviation (and shipping) emissions in the UK Climate Change Act, it is also important that the sector develops a global level of ambition. Work is underway to assess options for a 2050 goal, and build political consensus, ahead of a potential decision at ICAO's next Assembly in 2022.

The UK's formal departure from the EU on the 31st December meant changes to the way carbon pricing is applied to aviation emissions, with the UK creating its own emissions trading scheme and linking it back to the EU's scheme. The need to negotiate an air services agreement with the EU allowed the opportunity to review how to treat the taxation of kerosene. AEF argued (in a meeting with the aviation minister) against the UK's initial stance that fuel should be exempt from tax on routes to and from the EU, and we were pleased to see that the final Agreement had dropped this provision, opening the way for possible taxation in the future.

As well as policy work, AEF has been partnering with other European and US NGOs to develop new campaigns aimed at raising awareness about aviation's climate impacts among consumers, especially corporate travellers, and the public generally. We hope to tell you more about these projects in our 2021 annual report.

4. MEDIA

573 new Twitter followers

80 appearances in written media

9 appearances on TV and radio

With COVID-19 dominating the headlines, media focus shifted away from 2019's questions about flying less and onto whether the industry would or should be getting government bailouts, and how it could 'build back better' post-pandemic. Despite the shift in media attention, AEF saw a 15% increase in appearances across written media, TV and radio compared to 2019, including appearances in programmes for BBC and Channel 4.

2020 also saw the launch of AEF's new website, as well as new branding across our materials. We hope that this refresh has helped to make our site and materials more accessible to our audience. Visit aef.org.uk to check out our new look.

TEAM



Tim Johnson
director



Cait Hewitt
deputy director



Deborah Lovatt
outreach manager



Lizzie Harrocks
communications officer



Tim Thomas
finance officer

FUNDRAISING AND FINANCES

We aim to keep membership fees affordable to ensure that everyone can have access to our advice and information service. We are grateful to our funders and donors for helping to subsidise the costs of providing these services, and supporting our work programme more generally. Apart from membership fees, AEF's work is dependent entirely on philanthropic and charitable funders. We do not receive public funds or donations from industry. AEF continues to operate within budget and maintains a positive balance of funds. To ensure appropriate scrutiny of our work programme and to promote good governance, we are grateful for the oversight provided by our Executive Council which is elected annually by our membership.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

AEF's aim is:

- to protect the environment, public health and quality of life through securing policies and measures that ensure effective limits on noise, emissions and other environmental impacts from aviation.

AEF's objectives are:

- to seek effective legislation, policies and other measures by working with local, national and international policy-making and legislative bodies;
- to promote practical solutions through consultation and co-operation with AEF members, regulatory and public bodies, the aviation industry, and others;
- to support our members and affected communities in liaising with decision makers and other stakeholders;
- to provide advice, analysis and information;
- to publicise and promote the role and responsibilities of the Federation.