



# 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

While further lockdowns and travel restrictions meant that passengers at UK airports remained significantly below their peak in 2019, there was no slowdown in the aviation climate debate. Aviation may not have been on the formal agenda for November's COP26 meeting in Glasgow, but the public expectation that the Government, as host, would match its stated ambition with action prompted a raft of new commitments and emerging policies in 2021.

The Government also committed to net zero aviation by 2050 and set out its initial views on how this could be delivered. You can read more about our response to 'Jet Zero' in this report, but we think the draft strategy falls a long way short of the measures required to decarbonise the sector. The absence of a coherent plan highlights the dangers of further expanding our airports, yet many airports are currently seeking approval to increase their capacity with applications at various stages of the planning process. This meant a busy year helping communities to present their case at public inquiries.

Our members' survey told us that while some communities experienced less noise as a result of travel restrictions, this was not the case for everyone. Increased freight activity at night and changes in arrival and departure patterns are some of the reasons why noise continued to generate complaints. And with airports receiving funding to accelerate local airspace changes, communities have sought assurances that their interests will be represented fairly in the airspace modernisation process.

Finally, a thank you to our members and funders for your continued support, which ensured operational continuity throughout lockdown and delivery of a full work programme. We hope you enjoy reading about our highlights.

## 1. Aircraft noise & airspace

In 2021, AEF's work on aircraft noise featured prominently in our work programme. Responding to Part 1 of the Department for Transport's (DfT) night noise consultation, we stressed that communities want an end to aircraft noise at night, not an extension to current restrictions. In our response to Part 2 of the consultation in March, we highlighted the weaknesses in the industry's claims around the economic benefits of night flights, commissioning a report from the New Economics Foundation to evidence our case.

During the summer and autumn, we attended the Civil Aviation Authority's 'co-creation workshops' on refreshing the Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS), as well as the DfT's Steering Group on the public health impacts of aircraft noise.

Airspace modernisation will likely see aircraft fly more precise routes along narrow corridors facilitated by performance-based navigation (though PBN could support multiple corridors). When we asked members for their views on the AMS and PBN in our members' survey launched in September 2021, most felt that environmental objectives were side-lined. One respondent summed up the concerns of many in their fear that PBN would create "noise sewers" for some.

As airspace modernisation seemed to be gathering pace, AEF and the Aviation Communities Forum (ACF) agreed that there was a mutual benefit in joining forces to help amplify community concerns. On the 1st of January, ACF became the Airspace and Noise Community Forum (ANCF) of the AEF, with Charles Lloyd as the lead coordinator. The Forum will work with communities across the UK who are adversely impacted by aircraft operations, sharing issues of common concern and engaging constructively with the Government, regulators and industry to seek positive policy outcomes.

As we move into 2022, the CAA has launched a three-part public consultation of its refreshed Airspace Modernisation Strategy. The AMS details the "ends, ways and means" of driving forward airspace change. The overall aims are to achieve enhanced safety, greater efficiency and increased capacity, while simultaneously delivering environmental gains, including "better managing" noise impacts. AEF's response will raise our members' concerns.

## 2. Net zero and challenging airport expansion

AEF celebrated a big policy win in 2021, as the Government finally committed to legislating for decarbonising the aviation industry. Previously, the 2009 Climate Change Act gave emissions from international aviation and shipping an ambiguous status, being 'allowed for' but not formally included in carbon budgets. As a result of this, there was no legal cap on these emissions and little pressure for the Government to create aviation climate policies.

However, following the Government's decision to increase the overall ambition of the Climate Change Act, AEF joined forces with the UK's biggest green NGOs to call on the Prime Minister to make the UK the first country in the world to legislate for the decarbonisation of aviation and shipping. The CCC (the Government's own experts), as well as AEF, advised that 'net zero' must apply to all industries, including aviation, and in April of 2021, the Government announced that these sectors would be brought into the scope of the sixth carbon budget.

What we now need, though, is a plan for how to deliver on this target. AEF drew attention to insufficiencies in the proposals published in July for the UK's aviation climate policy. Our views were published in the Guardian, the BBC and many other publications, drawing attention to the Government's over-reliance on technology in their proposals, the contradiction of expanding airports while trying to curb emissions, and the action needed in order to meet net-zero by 2050. We have also made these arguments in consultation responses, with MPs when we gave evidence to both the Environmental Audit Committee and the Transport Committee, and at both Stansted and Bristol planning inquiries into expansion proposals.

Net zero is an ambitious goal requiring concerted policy action. In response to this challenge we have commissioned our own 'jet zero' modelling which will allow us to present more realistic aviation emission trajectories, and to challenge both the Government's and industry's modelling in 2022.

## 3. International policy work

In 2020 we reported that the UN body ICAO, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, was assessing the feasibility of a long-term climate goal for the sector, ahead of a decision at its 'Assembly' (a meeting of all 193 contracting states that's only held every three years) in 2023. The last twelve months saw a continuation of this work, with AEF participating in the working groups which have been assessing the potential for technological and operational improvements, as well as alternative fuels.

AEF also plays a lead role in updating ICAO's carbon calculator. The need to provide better information to the public, especially consumers, on the climate impact of flying is gaining recognition. Our wider work on this topic has included engaging with regulators and the industry, and we're pleased to see the emergence of flight booking tools that disclose carbon data on a flight by flight basis prior to the point of sale. Moving forward, we hope this will lead to standardisation and greater transparency.

While the pandemic forced many businesses to fly less, we and other environmental groups are keen to see permanent changes to business travel to help companies meet their own net zero commitments. During the year we supported the #justusetteams campaign which challenged Microsoft to switch from flying to Teams for employee meetings.



# 4. MEDIA

46% increase in written media coverage →

15% increase in Twitter followers →

# TEAM

	
	
	
	<p>1. Tim Johnson, Director</p> <p>2. Cait Hewitt, Policy Director</p> <p>3. Deborah Lovatt, Head of Planning &amp; Outreach</p> <p>4. Florence Long, Communications &amp; Admin Officer</p> <p>5. Max Thrower, Campaigns Communication Officer</p> <p>6. Tim Thomas, Finance Officer</p> <p>7. Charles Lloyd, Lead, Airspace &amp; Noise Community Forum</p>

In 2022, AEF was interviewed, quoted or mentioned in 117 national media stories, covering all media formats, from print and online media to radio, television and podcasts. This included BBC News and Radio 4's Today programme, and we were pleased to work with the research team behind the aviation episode of '39 Ways To save the Planet'. The Guardian and the Sunday Times also provided in-depth coverage of our analysis of the carbon implications of UK airport expansion, and this work was referenced by the Climate Change Committee.

After almost 5 years at AEF, Lizzie Harrocks decided to move on to a new career in 2022. We would like to thank her for her excellent work as our Communications 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 for 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.