

Wycombe Air Park

Set in 204 acres leased from Wycombe District Council by a wholly-owned subsidiary of British Airways, Wycombe Air Park (WAP) is home to the British Airways Flying Club as well as several other firms engaged in aviation. Helicopters are operated by Helicopter Services Ltd, (HS) and HeliAir Services (HAS). These two companies account for the bulk of the almost 16,000 annual helicopter movements up to the end of September 2006. HS will train rookies, re-certify mature helicopter pilots, and offers leisure flights over the Chiltern Hills or Central London. HAS is a maintenance organisation.

There have been attempts by WAP's management to minimise the number of local residents affected by the staccato roar of helicopter overflights (and fixed wing, for that matter), but since these have involved concentrating the flights in corridors, those residents who are still overflowed now receive almost all the noise. With 16,000 helicopter movements (of which 63% occur from April to September and especially on summer weekends) there is growing resentment and anger on the part of affected households.

WAP has no plans to ameliorate this noise, preferring merely to move it around and so dump it on others. The local Helicopter Noise Coalition (HNC) is asking WAP to restrict on helicopter flight at weekends and on public holidays. In the first instance, HNC seeks to restrict training flights, as these tend to be lower and to stray further off agreed paths. Ultimately though, regulatory restrictions are required, so that local residents at Wycombe, and elsewhere in the country, do not have to depend on airfield managers curbing their operations voluntarily.

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news from our networks ...

To get wider support for our campaigns, the AEF administers several national and international networks, working closely with other NGOs and local groups worldwide. This section aims to provide an update on their activities.

airportwatch

AirportWatch has drawn up its strategy for 2007, which aims to build on the success of the *rethink!* campaign in 2006. Key themes include: undermining the economic case for airport expansion with a series of targeted reports; working with political parties to help them develop greener aviation policies, and broadening the coalition by forging links with new allies such as development groups and the UK tourism industry.

Latest news at www.airportwatch.org.uk

ICSA – the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation

At the time of going to press, ICAO's Committee on Aviation Environmental Protection (CAEP) was holding its seventh plenary session in Montreal (5-16 Feb 2007). Although no proposals are on the table to improve the stringency of certification standards for either aircraft noise or local emissions, the meeting is expected to approve guidance on the use of local air quality charges and how to include aviation into emissions trading schemes. ICSA is participating in the meeting and a full report will be provided in the next newsletter.



Flying Green

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Aims and Objectives

The objectives of the Federation are as follows:

- to foster a climate of opinion which takes full account of the environmental issues arising from aircraft and aerodrome use;
- to promote a relationship between the environment and aviation in which the detrimental effects of aviation on quality of life and on the natural and man-made environment are kept to a minimum;
- to encourage wide discussion of the problems involved and to seek practical solutions;
- to consult and co-operate with local, national and international governments, the aviation industry, regulatory authorities, universities, professional institutions, research bodies, and any others for the purpose of reducing noise, disturbance and all forms of pollution by technical and operational means;
- to pursue these objectives with policy-making and legislative bodies - local, national and international - so that laws and policies include measures for effective environmental protection;
- to provide relevant advice and information to assist its members;
- to publicise and promote the viewpoint of the Federation through the media and through representation among bodies responsible for aviation matters as appropriate

Flying Green is now published on a regular quarterly basis. We hope to publish members' letters in the next issue, so do please send them in on any subject.

A lack of progress report

By the time the Department for Transport published its Air Transport White Paper Progress Report in mid-December, it had received over 8,000 e-mails, letters and postcards from the public urging it to rethink its policy. Heads of environmental, religious and development organisations, climate scientists, shadow ministers, parliamentary committees and even its own advisers on sustainability had all made representations, calling on the Government to acknowledge the need to manage the growth in aviation. The result? Although over half of the document was devoted to environmental matters, the central premise remained unchanged – that airports should be expanded to cater for the rapid increase in demand for flights.

After the Stern Review on the economics of climate change, which recommended that Government move quickly to put a price on carbon, the DfT needed to show that environmental costs were being counted. This was done in two ways. The first was a proposal for a new 'Emissions Cost Assessment', which would weigh the carbon costs of major new infrastructure projects against the supposed economic benefits. At first sight this looks a welcome development, but as ever the devil will be in the detail. Since costs are routinely downplayed and benefits exaggerated in official estimates, it would be very dangerous if these figures were used to give the green light to airport expansion.

A similar approach was taken in the revised passenger forecasts. The original White Paper gave a central estimate of 500 million passengers by 2030. The Progress Report redid the calculations, this time assuming that the 'full cost' of aviation's carbon would be factored in within five years. With a little help from 'robust low-cost growth' and a slightly revised assumption about consumer purchasing habits, the new forecasts came out at... 490 million, showing that all those runways still need to be built, and it is environmentally responsible to do so. Unsurprisingly, AEF disagrees – See Editorial inside.

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Editorial – An Unholy Trio

No self-respecting politician these days can deny that everything should pay its environmental costs – least of all the Prime Minister in waiting. But it would be awkward for Gordon Brown if the need to save the planet hampered his plans for the UK economy (which will of course collapse without two new runways in the South East). So in an astute piece of political positioning, the Chancellor commissioned himself a trio of reports – the Stern Review of the economics of climate change, the Eddington Review of the UK's transport infrastructure, and the Barker Review of planning policy.

The Stern report is an exhaustive piece of work. Few will have read its 700 pages of economic analysis. But a few of its headline messages were widely reported – it is economically rational to take action to tackle climate change; the sooner we act the better; carbon must be priced in to all activities. That all sounds very positive, but there is an unwelcome flipside: we should only take those actions that can be shown to be 'economically rational'. So for instance, Stern focuses on stabilising CO2 in the atmosphere at 550 parts per million, since it would be too expensive to stabilise at 450 ppm – the level beyond which scientists are warning we will greatly increase the risk of seeing catastrophic climate change.

The concept of 'pricing in carbon' provided a backdrop for Eddington. He repeated the mantra that transport should pay its environmental costs, but insisted on the need for 'world-class infrastructure'. That means, (you guessed it) bigger airports, and in particular a third runway at Heathrow. In support of this analysis, he quoted figures for the economic benefits of new runways (from an industry-funded study carried out when he was boss of BA). Since these are larger than the cost of the damage, it all makes sense...

Having dealt with the climate change objections, it remains only to ensure that all that airport expansion can be delivered smoothly. This has been problematic in the past. The Terminal 5 inquiry lasted for years,

and more recently a local council in Essex got above itself and declared that Government policy on aviation emissions wasn't good enough, and therefore they were unable to approve more planes at Stansted. Imagine the trouble if everyone decided to follow their example...

Barker Review to the rescue. The report recommends setting up a new national body to decide on projects that are in the 'national interest'. The indications are that this would be a centrally-appointed committee, which would pass judgment on projects already determined by central government to be in the nation's interests, with environmental questions subjected to a hard-headed cost-benefit analysis. In the case of new runways, this analysis will be provided by the Emissions Cost Assessment carried out by the Department for Transport.

In addition to the over-centralised, undemocratic nature of such a decision-making process, there are fundamental problems with using a pure cost-benefit approach. The most obvious is the impossibility of pricing the damage done by a tonne of carbon. What price do you place on a human life? The UN estimates that 150,000 are already lost to climate change each year. (As it happens, most of these are in Africa, so they come pretty cheap if you measure the loss according to GDP.)

To give an illustration of the difficulties involved: the Government's official carbon cost is currently £70 per tonne (with a range of £10 - £140). But converting the cost adopted by Stern to today's prices gives a figure around four times as high. And that's only to stabilise at *dangerous* levels of CO2. If we want to play it safe and aim for 450ppm, the cost would be at least four times that again, says Stern. So we end up with a price range for carbon of £10-£1000. Approximately.

To be fair to Sir Nicholas Stern, I don't think he envisaged his labours being used to justify new runways. In fact he explicitly warns governments against 'locking into high-carbon infrastructure' until a proper carbon market has developed.

That part of the message seems to have got lost.

Aircraft markings – a layman's guide

If aircraft are being a nuisance then one of the best ways to identify them is by their registration marks. The rules governing markings are designed to make them clearly visible from 500ft.

The nationality mark of aircraft registered in the UK is a G followed by a hyphen and 4 capital letters in Roman script. The registration marks must be kept clean, be easily visible and be of a uniform height and colour.

On fixed wing aircraft the marks must appear on the lower surface of the port (left) wing structure. Letters must be at least 50 centimetres where practicable. Marks can also be put on vertical tail surfaces, but must appear on both sides and must be of the greatest height practicable or on each side of the fuselage and be located between the wings and the horizontal tail surface.

For helicopters where owing to the structure of the aircraft the greatest height of marks is less than 30 centimetres, the marks must also appear on the lower surface of the fuselage and be at least 50 centimetres, where practicable.

In the case of balloons and airships the marks should be placed on both sides and be visible both horizontally and from the ground and at least 50 centimetres high.

Once you have an aircraft's registration number, you can then access the CAA's aircraft database to find out more information about it. This can be found at www.tinyurl.com/9jsz2. If the aircraft is foreign registered, different rules apply, and you will have to pay to get data on the aircraft via www.aviation-register.com. Don't forget to take down dates and times as well!

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Proposal for an AEF helicopter working group

AEF members at Wycombe Air Park have proposed that those who suffer nuisance from helicopters should form a sub-group to develop proposals to control helicopter noise. The proposal is especially timely since the GLA recently published a report on helicopter noise in London, and many of their recommendations could be widened to the country at large.

If you are interested in attending a special AEF meeting on Helicopters, please contact the office. We are looking to hold the meeting as soon as practicable, in London.

The AEF and the Airfields Environment Trust

Did you know that the AEF also has a charitable sister organisation? The AEF itself is a membership organisation, but to finance its day-to-day work it could not rely completely on membership subscriptions. That would mean many more members or a much higher subscription, and membership is naturally limited by the number of airfields. So a further source of funding is required.

This is where the Airfields Environment Trust comes in. It works to promote understanding of the adverse effects of aviation, both local and global, and explores ways to reduce them. It does this by requesting and authorising consultancy work from the AEF and its employees.

As a registered charity it benefits by being able to claim Gift Aid tax relief (28% or 40% on the value of the donations). If you are a higher-rate taxpayer, you can claim higher-rate relief on any payment made to the Trust. To make a donation, or for more details, please contact the office.