

## News from the AEF office

AEF has some new staff. **Cait** (short for Catrina) joined the team in November, replacing Pete as Policy and Communications Officer. Her paid work previously had been in education and in social research, but with a background in climate change issues she was keen to make the shift into environmental policy. She is looking forward to getting a fuller understanding of local aviation issues, so let her know if your group is having a meeting and she might just bring a bottle. Email: [cait@aeef.org.uk](mailto:cait@aeef.org.uk)

**Laura** joined AEF in December, in the new post of Policy Coordinator. She comes fresh from two years of combining casework for her local MP with campaigns and policy work for the World Development Movement. After growing up under the Heathrow flight path she felt compelled to challenge irresponsible airport expansion. Laura will be working part-time with AEF, liaising with members on policy issues, raising our media profile and stealing the biscuits at meetings. Email: [laura@aeef.org.uk](mailto:laura@aeef.org.uk)

## Hot off the press: AEF's new planning handbook

AEF's planning advisor, Riki Therivel, with research support from Titilayo Iyore, has been working on an updated, extended, version of the AEF's handbook *Aviation, the environment and planning law* – a publication from 1995 for which we still get requests! The new handbook, nearly 300 pages in total, will be published in electronic rather than printed form, and will be appearing any day now on the AEF's website.

Riki and Titilayo are happy to help with specific planning queries from AEF members; please contact [titilayo@aeef.org.uk](mailto:titilayo@aeef.org.uk).

## News from our networks

The AEF administers or supports several national and international networks, working closely with other NGOs and local groups worldwide. This section provides an update on recent activities.



AirportWatch held a successful noise conference for local groups last November, and is planning on launching a new campaign on air freight in the spring. Following strong regional interest from local groups in the West Country, AW has recently established AirportWatch South West. Further details available from [laura@aeef.org.uk](mailto:laura@aeef.org.uk) or [sarah@airportwatch.org.uk](mailto:sarah@airportwatch.org.uk)

## ICSA – the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation

ICSA represents the environmental movement as an observer to the UN's International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO). Over 190 countries contract to ICAO, gathering every 3 years for an Assembly in Montreal. The 36<sup>th</sup> Assembly was held last autumn, and high on the agenda was how to address greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft. Predictably, ten years after ICAO was given this mandate by the Kyoto Protocol, it has still failed to deliver a global plan or even a target to reduce emissions. Differences in regional perspectives existed that were difficult to reconcile. This led Europe to protect its flexibility, ahead of EU legislation to include aviation in an emissions trading scheme, by filing a reservation. This unusual step, stated that European states would not recognise the validity of the Assembly's conclusions, as they were viewed as being too prescriptive in an area where few other regions appeared to be taking effective action.



# Flying Green

Winter 2007/2008

## 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.

Have you thought of making a tax-free donation or a bequest in your will to the AEF's main funders, the Airfields Environment Trust? More details available from the office.



## Noise study undermines government figures

We have waited six years for its completion, and when it was finally published late last year it came with several government reservations requiring further work, so it won't be used immediately to inform government policy. Yet for many communities affected by aircraft noise, the publication of the Attitudes to Noise from Aircraft Sources in England report (ANASE) confirmed what they had been saying for years, notably:

- that annoyance is experienced at far lower than the government's threshold of 57 dBA Leq, and
- that annoyance is very dependent on the number of noise events.

The latter is very important as many airport noise commitments are referenced to contour areas: the implication being that no change in the area means no change in annoyance, even when the removal of some noisy aircraft allows for many more movements by less-noisy ones. The ANASE report provides clear evidence to the contrary.

The government's use of 57 Leq as the threshold for considering noise stems back to a survey of annoyance conducted in the 1980s. This threshold would fall to 50 dBA Leq based on an equivalent percentage of the population being highly annoyed today. This represents an increase of hundreds of thousands of people exposed around the UK's airports and airfields.

The study also looked at applying monetary values to cost aircraft noise, but peer review comments have persuaded the government to consider further work on this topic. Nevertheless, this should not divert attention away from the findings on annoyance.

Aviation Minister, Jim Fitzpatrick said "The government accepts that noise from aircraft is a growing concern and will take into account those people affected by aircraft noise when considering the costs and benefits of future projects" but added that the government would continue to look at 57 dBA because "The ANASE study also makes clear that it is impossible to identify any particular level at which noise becomes a serious problem."

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## New AEF website launched!



Nic Ferriday

AEF has a new website, replacing the old one at <http://www.aef.org.uk>. The new site makes it easier for surfers to locate material, and is less time-consuming to update. Like the old site, there are 'news', 'about', 'join', and 'contact' pages. The big 'aviation and the environment' section has been replaced by 'A-Z of aviation and the environment'. There is a new page for 'press releases and position statements' and 'publications' now has its own page.

All the data from the old site has been transferred across, except for a few items that were clearly obsolete, and we will be adding additional materials over the coming months. Unfortunately, some URLs (the unique references that identify a web page) have changed. This means that links from other sites to individual AEF pages may no longer work. If you are responsible for a site or are otherwise involved, it would be worth checking the links.

It may be helpful here to explain the role of the AEF site. Since the AEF is the principal national organisation in the UK dealing exclusively with the environmental effects of aviation, we aim to provide information on major national or international issues around aviation and the environment. News stories are added only when they relate to these major issues. For example, government consultations and international developments are reported, but snippets about airlines and airports are not. The site does not generally deal with individual airport issues (although we provide links to specific airport campaign groups), or have campaigning materials. These functions are provided by Airport Watch and its website – <http://www.airportwtach.org.uk> – though it does provide advice on cross-cutting issues (for example, consultative committees) and on how to address environmental impacts.

We have tested and checked the site, but it always possible that faults have not been detected. Please let me know if you find any ([nic@aef.org.uk](mailto:nic@aef.org.uk)). We'd also like it to have more pictures, so please send in any good photos that we might be able to use.

## Recommended reading, but not for the faint hearted



Tim Thomas

**Field Notes from a Catastrophe – a frontline report on climate change**, by Elizabeth Kolbert (published by Bloomsbury in paperback at £7.99; ISBN 978-0-7475-8550-

This book is an excellent summary of what we have learnt and have not done to halt global warming since it was first recognised in the late 1970s. The author takes us on a journey from the Arctic to Central America, interviewing researchers, environmentalists and traditional Inuits whose lives have already been dramatically altered by climate change.

It explains the science without drowning the reader in too much technical detail. To quote the Times Literary Supplement, it is "short, readable and scrupulously objective". If you know someone who still does not understand the reality and scale of the impending catastrophe that this world is approaching, then you will want to give them this book.

### AGM News

At the AEF's AGM, held last November at London's Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy, it was agreed that AEF should initiate a study into local noise measures adopted by airports and airfields. With reluctance on the part of government to use its discretionary powers in favour of local dispute resolution, the AEF study will examine what has been delivered, the motivation and effectiveness. Members will be contacted later in the year by Laura Simpson.

## Your new runway goes here. What colour would you like the gates?



Cait Weston

There was a cartoon a few years ago, illustrating the launch of a public consultation about a local incinerator. The caption read 'Your incinerator goes here. What colour would you like the gates?' The launch, on 22<sup>nd</sup> November, of the consultation on Heathrow expansion seems unnervingly similar; it's hard not to

feel the government has made up its collective mind in advance. "For too long [Heathrow] has operated at nearly full capacity, with relatively minor problems causing severe delays to passengers," said transport secretary Ruth Kelly. "If nothing changes, Heathrow's status as a world-class airport will be gradually eroded - jobs will be lost and the economy will suffer."

The government's plan has, for several years, been to expand Heathrow airport, but with three environmental constraints: the total area affected by an average noise contour of 57 dBA or higher must not be increased, air pollution must be kept within European limits, and access to the airport by public transport must be improved. The Department for Transport (DfT) now believes that all these conditions can be met by 2020 – the earliest by which the third runway could be operational – and is consulting till the end of February 2008 to see if the public agree.

There are no questions on the response form asking whether you support Heathrow expansion in principle. Other than those about the environmental safeguards, questions focus only on the details of expansion (such as whether a third runway should be supported by an extra terminal) or on how to mitigate remaining noise-related problems. Respondents are asked for their views on ending the Cranford agreement, and on possible changes to mixed mode operations.

At AEF, we remain to be convinced that the environmental provisos to Heathrow expansion can be satisfied. Air pollution around the airport has consistently breached EU limits designed to protect human health; figures on air quality quoted by the DfT in their consultation document rely on future technologies delivering low-emissions aircraft. We believe compliance with air quality limits should come first, and an increase in flights be considered only once we know for sure what the air quality impacts will be. DfT projections about noise reductions as a result of futuristic quieter planes are also dangerously optimistic, we argue, and we have been dismayed by the government's decision to ignore the results of the ANASE study which indicated that a better indicator of significant noise annoyance is now closer to 50dBA than the previous figure of 57dBA. In relation to the stipulation of public transport improvements, we would like to know not only what percentage of people is predicted to arrive at Heathrow by public transport following expansion, but also the absolute numbers of people likely to arrive by car.

And then, of course, there's climate change – notable by its absence from the environmental pre-conditions set for Heathrow expansion. We have yet to see any credible plan about how the inevitable increases in emissions that accompany increases in flights can be compatible with the UK's commitments on carbon reduction. The government may think their Heathrow plans are done and dusted. We think there's still a lot to be said.

Consultation documents, including a response form, are available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/heathrowconsultation/>

AEF will be submitting a full response; a briefing paper on our position is available at <http://www.aef.org.uk/?p=222>