



Department  
for Transport

# Guidelines for Airport Consultative Committees

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# Purpose of these guidelines

1. The Government expects all aerodromes<sup>1</sup> to communicate openly and effectively with their local communities and users of the airport about the impact of their operations. Airport Consultative Committees (ACCs) are a well-established way in which airports can engage with key stakeholders in the local area and beyond.
2. These guidelines are intended to assist those involved in establishing, running and participating in airport consultative committees. While the Government recognises that each airport consultative committee should work in a way that best suits the local circumstances within which it operates, this document sets out some particular principles and standards that committees can use to ensure they operate in an effective and constructive way.
3. These guidelines are intended to be applicable to all aerodromes with a consultation process, not only those designated under Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (see paragraph 1.2). We recognise the differences in circumstance between individual aerodromes and that arrangements and procedures for one committee may not be appropriate for another. Committees should determine how best to apply these guidelines for their specific circumstances, however, we expect that the basic underlining principles (as described in section 2) will be applicable across all committees.
4. The guidance is also intended to be useful for not only aerodromes that have, or intend to, set up a consultative committee, but also those who sit on the committees and other parties with an interest in the consultative procedures of airports.
5. These Guidelines supersede the previous version published by the Department in December 2003.

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<sup>1</sup> In these guidelines 'aerodrome' applies to any aerodrome, irrespective of the size of operation. The term 'airport' is used interchangeably in this document.

# 1. The Basics

## What are Airport Consultative Committees?

- 1.1 ACCs are structured forums that provide an opportunity for the exchange of information between aerodromes and interested parties. They make recommendations to the aerodrome management and other bodies when appropriate as well as being a place where there is an opportunity to reach common understanding between interested groups about the nature of the aerodrome operation in the hope that issues can be resolved amicably.
- 1.2 There are 51<sup>2</sup> aerodromes throughout England, Wales and Scotland that are designated under section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to provide "facilities for consultation". The Aerodromes Designation (Facilities for Consultation) Order 1996 as amended (SI 2002/2421) provides the list of airports that are designated. Separate arrangements exist for the designation of airports in Northern Ireland, namely Article 20(1) of the Airports (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.

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<sup>2</sup> The Government is aware that the list of airports in *The Aerodromes Designation (Facilities for Consultation) Order 1996 (SI 1996/1392)* as amended (SI 2002/2421) currently includes airports that are no longer in operation.

## Legislative and Policy Context

### **Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 (as amended)**

- 1 This section applies to any aerodrome which is designated for the purposes of this section by an Order made by the Secretary of State.
- 2 The person having the management of any aerodrome to which this section applies shall provide:-
  - a. for users of the aerodrome,
  - b. for any local authority (or, if the person having the management of the aerodrome is a local authority, for any other local authority in whose area the aerodrome or any part thereof is situated or whose area is in the neighbourhood of the aerodrome), and
  - c. for any other organisation representing the interests of persons concerned with the locality in which the aerodrome is situated,
  - d. adequate facilities for consultation with respect to any matter concerning the management or administration of the aerodrome which affects their interests.
- 3 The reference in subsection (2)(b) above to any local authority includes in relation to the area of Greater London a reference to the Mayor of London acting on behalf of the Greater London Authority.

- 1.3** The Government considers that the best means of ensuring fair treatment of the different categories of statutory consultees is through a consultative committee formed for this purpose. This provides an opportunity for the aerodrome to consult relevant groups simultaneously as well as allowing those groups to engage with each other directly.
- 1.4** However, the Government would not expect the absence of statutory designation to be a barrier to effective consultation, as it should be a matter of good practice at airports.
- 1.5** The Aviation Policy Framework states that:

*"The Government expects all airports and aerodromes to communicate openly and effectively with their local communities about the impact of their operations."*<sup>3</sup>

## **Users of the aerodrome**

- 1.6** These will vary depending on the specific aerodrome in question. For many airports, passengers are obviously among the most central user groups, along with the airlines that carry them and the other associated services. Consultative committees are well placed to ensure passenger interests are represented and communicated to the airport. At the largest airports, having a passenger-focused sub-group might be appropriate to consider these issues in detail.
- 1.7** As far as possible, a full range of users of the airport should be represented on committees, or at least their views taken into account. This may include, but is not limited to, passengers, airlines (or their representative associations), retailers, training schools, freight companies, ground services, as well as those involved in any general aviation operating from the airport.

## **Local Authorities**

- 1.8** Local Authority members have an important representational role on behalf of their constituents, particularly when they represent communities close to or affected by the airport's operations. They should represent the full range of issues relevant to their authority, including planning, economic and environmental interests. Membership on a consultative committee may also enable local authorities to better consider how the airport features in local authority plans and policies through the knowledge gained by being represented on the committee.

## **Others with an interest**

- 1.9** The third category of Section 35 refers to any other organisation representing the interests of persons concerned with the locality in which the aerodrome is situated. While both the size of the locality and the type of organisation will vary according to local circumstances, this category would include community organisations such as local environmental groups and residents associations, local business and enterprise groups as well as tourism and consumer bodies.

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<sup>3</sup> Aviation Policy Framework, 2013, pg 68

## The Role of Committees

- 1.10** Committees are made up of representatives from the three "categories" mentioned above - users of the airport, local authorities in the vicinity of the airport and other organisations from the community surrounding the airport that have an interest in the operations and management of the airport.
- 1.11** They should promote greater understanding both to the surrounding community about airport operations and to the airport operator about the impact of those airport operations and any proposed operations. Topics discussed at meetings can vary widely, but often include environmental issues, airport development, updates on airport operations, an overview of any passenger service issues and surface access.
- 1.12** The nature of consultative committees and, indeed, of "adequate facilities for consultation" will depend upon the type and scale of the aerodrome and is likely to be site specific.
- 1.13** Committees should recognise the wider role of the airport as an important local employer and influential driver in the local economy, as well as considering the local environmental impacts of an airport, including noise.<sup>4</sup> They can also play a vital role in protecting and enhancing the passenger experience at airports.
- 1.14** While committees are not dispute resolution forums and they do not have any executive or decision-making power over the aerodrome, they can facilitate constructive discussion and help resolve differences while maintaining an overview of trends. They also do not prevent interested parties from raising concerns directly with the airport.
- 1.15** Although the committees do not have any executive power, they should be holding airports to account by monitoring the implementation of commitments made by the airport and challenging their performance when necessary. For example, the Government expects committees to monitor the implementation of airports' commitments made under statutory Noise Action Plans, where relevant. They also have a role in protecting and enhancing facilities for passengers.
- 1.16** While many committees operate to fulfil a legislative requirement, there are examples of committees being set up at airports that are not designated under section 35 which

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<sup>4</sup> Aviation Policy Framework, 2013, pg 68



demonstrates the value committees can have in helping various interests reach a common understanding of the impact of airport operations.

## The purpose and benefits of consultation

**1.17** Consultation has many benefits for the local community, the users of airports, local authorities and aerodrome operators. For example, it can:

- enable aerodrome operators, communities in the vicinity of the aerodrome, local authorities, local business representatives, aerodrome users and other interested parties to exchange information and ideas;
- enable aerodrome operators to identify, take account of and monitor trends, perceptions and potential challenges that may arise over time with specific groups of interests;
- allow the local community and users of the airport to influence the aerodrome operator's decision-making process in areas of mutual interest and increases the effectiveness of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and expertise;
- minimise unnecessary and costly conflict;
- allow the concerns of interested parties to be raised and taken into account by the aerodrome operators, with a genuine desire on all sides to resolve any issues that may emerge;
- allow the local community, users of the airport and other interested parties to better understand the aerodrome's operations;
- complement the legal framework within which the aerodrome operates;

**1.18** However, consultation is not intended to:

- detract from or constrain the responsibility of the aerodrome owner and/or operator to manage the aerodrome;
- prevent interested parties from raising concerns directly with the aerodrome, or through other channels.

## 2. Principles for Airport Consultative Committees

- 2.1** We recognise that committees vary widely in size and scope as do the specific operating procedures and arrangements and what works for one aerodrome will not necessarily work at another. However committees do, at their heart, have a similar role and purpose and thus can operate to a common set of principles.

### Independent

- 2.2** While the onus is on airports to provide facilities for and (usually) fund airport consultative committees, it is important that they are and they are perceived as being independent from the airport in order to maintain the confidence of all interested parties. Committees should be free to say what they think on issues. Committees should, as far as possible, be transparent about how and why they are funded, and chairs should be appointed through an open and transparent process.

### Representative

- 2.3** Section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 specifies the categories of bodies or organisations that should be consulted and it is important that a committee comprises an appropriate range of views that is representative of those affected by, or involved in, the operations of the airport.
- 2.4** Committees could also consider the need for independent representatives, who are not affiliated with any organisation, when it comes to representing passenger interests.

### **The size of a committee**

- 2.5** While the exact size of the committee will depend upon local circumstances, the committee should be a manageable size. Where there are a number of organisations that have a similar interest in the operations of the airport, thought should be

given to ways in which those interests can be appropriately represented without making the committee unwieldy.

- 2.6** Although personal experience can be useful, members should represent the views of their wider organisation (unless they have been appointed as independent members of the committee), consulting with other members of the organisation before meetings and feeding back afterwards.

### **Making sure the mix is appropriate**

- 2.7** There must be sufficient representation from each of the three discrete groups identified at section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 to ensure that the views of that group are adequately expressed. There should be fair and equitable treatment of the different categories with no one interest dominating the committee, however it is more important to ensure that there is a representative balance of interests rather than to attempt equal numeric representation. Subject to ensuring adequate representation for each group, each committee has discretion to decide on the scope and level of representation based on local circumstances and practice.

- 2.8** The groups represented will vary between aerodromes: the users at an airport with a mixture of commercial air transport and general aviation (GA) flights may encompass a wider spectrum of interested parties than either a major airport or a small GA aerodrome. The scale of interest from the local community and local authorities is also likely to be more significant at larger aerodromes as the positive and negative impacts are likely to cover a wider geographic area.

### **Ensuring organisations are representative**

- 2.9** It can sometimes be difficult to judge whether a community organisation is truly representative of the community they claim to represent. Organisations should be clear about who they represent, as well as their aims and objectives. Ideally organisations represented on the committee should have a written constitution and documented membership to help secure the legitimacy of representatives.

## **Knowledgeable**

- 2.10** While it is not expected that members themselves are experts on every subject the committee discusses, members should seek to gain a general understanding of the issues involved

and should have a more in depth knowledge of the area they represent. All members should take an interest in the issues being discussed at meetings and be prepared to seek advice from others (such as officers from across the different organisational interests in the case of local authority representatives).

### **Specialist expertise**

- 2.11** It is often useful, especially at the larger airports' committees, if members are permitted to be accompanied by technical advisers (for example, elected council members may be supported by officers). Such advisers should not, however, intervene in committee proceedings unless invited to do so by the Chairman.
- 2.12** Depending on the size of the aerodrome and the subject matter for consideration, the committee could consider appointing an appropriate consultant having aviation and/or other relevant expertise to act as a specialist adviser to the committee as a whole.

### **Transparent**

- 2.13** Committees should be as open and transparent as possible about the issues they discuss and the conclusions they come to.
- 2.14** The wider local community and airport users should be made aware of the existence of the consultative committee and its role in relation to aerodrome operations as well as how to contact at least the Secretary of the committee.
- 2.15** The existence and role of the committee, as well as members of the committee and the organisations they represent, should be easily accessible to the community online through a section on the airport's own website or on a dedicated website. If the committee has its own website, the airport should provide appropriate signposting from its website. The website should also include a schedule of the committee's meetings as well as minutes of the meetings themselves.
- 2.16** Committees may also wish to explore different ways of communicating with interested parties (such as through social media or e-newsletters) that could provide opportunities to engage more effectively with the people they represent.

**2.17** Committees are encouraged to open their meetings to the public, unless there is a legitimate reason why it is inappropriate to do so. The manner in which the public are admitted to attend meetings should be decided by the committee according to local circumstances.

### **Balancing confidentiality and transparency**

**2.18** There may be times where the committee wishes to discuss matters that are confidential in nature. This can be handled in a variety of ways, from closing part of the meeting to the public to discussing confidential matters in a separate meeting (such as a steering group or a sub-group).

#### **Examples of the ways in which committees open to the public**

- Some committees allow the public to attend every meeting, although they are not permitted to ask questions.
- Other committees allow the public to attend meetings and ask questions in advance, to be answered during the meeting.
- One committee has one meeting open to the public per year.

### **Constructive and Effective**

**2.19** The wide variety of issues that consultative committees can get involved in, and the passion that some of those issues can invoke in people have the potential to lead to unproductive meetings. As far as possible, the committee should take a constructive role in issues, taking the opportunity to influence matters where appropriate. As the committee does not have executive powers, its role is more along the lines of a “critical friend”, to offer advice and encourage the airport to act on its advice by pointing out things that are working well, as well as being objectively (as far as possible) critical of areas where the airport could make improvements.

**2.20** Airport managers should take the opportunity to engage with the committee at an early enough stage of future plans in order for the committee to take a constructive role in advising the airport and where the airport can take advantage of the specific knowledge and expertise committee members have. The airport management should be willing to be influenced by the discussions and opinions of the committee in order to make the process of consultation meaningful. The airport is expected to take the committee’s views into account when

making decisions on matters about which the committee has been consulted.

- 2.21** The airport should be clear about areas where decisions have already taken place or where the committee's views cannot influence the situation.
- 2.22** When the views of the committee are expressed in response to being consulted, the presence of any significant minority opinion should be made clear, as well as those areas where there is agreement.
- 2.23** Committees could consider setting up an annual work plan that identifies priorities to help ensure work and discussions remain focused or publishing a short annual report detailing what has been achieved by the committee in the past year.
- 2.24** To ensure committees remain effective they should periodically review both their terms of reference and their membership. As part of this review, committees could also consider seeking feedback on their work from those they represent.

# 3. Effective Committees

## Set Up

### Funding

**3.1** The funding of committees is one issue that has the potential to be seen as compromising the independence of committees, as for many committees the administrative costs are covered by the airport. While there is little evidence that this is the case in practice, and as it is the airports that are legally responsible for providing facilities for consultation, committees should be transparent about how and why they are funded and seek to demonstrate how independence is achieved despite the financial ties.

### Chairs

- 3.2** One of the most important ways in which committees can ensure their independence is by appointing a chair through an open and transparent process, with the involvement of the committee itself. The chair should not be closely identified with any sectional interest. Thought should also be given to a term limit for chairs (for example, two terms of a maximum of five years), or at least reviewing the chairmanship periodically.
- 3.3** It is important that consultative committees have an effective chair who is able to gain the respect of the other committee members and should have the ability to draw together a wide range of views into a coherent conclusion.

### Secretariat

- 3.4** The Secretary should not be closely identified with any sectional interest.
- 3.5** A properly resourced secretariat should be appointed to ensure the effective working of the committee. A local authority (ideally, not a planning authority for the airport) may be suitably placed to carry out this function although other arrangements (such as an independent secretary) could also be appropriate. The necessary secretarial support will depend upon the size of the committee and the volume and nature of

the business handled. The duties of the secretariat should include:

- prepare minutes of the committee and distribute them to all members;
- issue notices of meetings of the committee and to place on the agenda any matters that are proper for the committee to consider;
- circulate relevant documents;
- publicise the output of the committee and maintain the committees website (where airport is not responsible for this)
- assist the committee on policy and technical issues, where appropriate.

### **Airport management**

**3.6** It is essential that the airport management participate fully in the committee proceedings by offering items for the agenda, attending meetings and by providing relevant information on the operation of the airport, answering questions and responding to points raised by the committee. Those attending on behalf of the airport should be at an appropriately senior level (for example CEO or Managing Director).

### **Frequency of meetings**

**3.7** The consultative committee should meet at least three times a year, unless the committee is satisfied that fewer meetings would suffice. This ensures committees can respond to issues in a timely manner and in a way that adds the most value. Members should be given as much notice as possible as to the time and place of meetings.

### **Venue**

**3.8** Unless otherwise agreed by the committee, the management of the aerodrome should arrange adequate facilities for meetings (as they have the legal duty to provide the facilities), having regard to travel convenience of members from the whole catchment. Venues should be accessible by public transport where reasonably possible.



## Terms of reference

**3.9** The terms of reference of the committee should be sufficiently widely drawn to allow it to consider all matters arising from the management and administration of the aerodrome. The exact terms of reference will be at the discretion of the committee but would be expected to cover existing and proposed facilities and services at the airport (especially those concerning passengers), input into environmental monitoring of the aerodrome, surface access, responses to formal consultation papers issued by government and other regulatory authorities, and consideration of the economic, social and environmental impact of airport operations.

### **Example items to include in the terms of reference:**

- To foster communication and build understanding between the airport and its users, local residents and the business community.
- To stimulate the interest of the local population in the development of the aerodrome.
- To consider and comment upon the impacts of the airport's administration, operation and development in relation to:
  - The environment
  - Surface access issues associated with the airport
  - Employment
  - The local, regional and national economy
  - The circumstances of local communities and their residents.
- To protect and enhance the interests of users of the aerodrome, particularly those of passengers.
- To consider and, if appropriate, comment upon any factual and consultative reports, from Governmental and other sources, that are material to the future character, operation and development of the airport.

## Sub Groups

**3.10** Some committees (particularly at the larger airports) may find it useful to form sub-groups to deal with specific issues or areas. This allows more detailed discussions to take place regarding specific issues (such as those encountered by passengers) between interested members of the committee. It also may allow those not directly represented on the committee to be involved in an issue that affects them, for

example some passenger sub-groups include independent passenger representatives who do not sit on the main committee. Sub-committees should report back to the main committee on issues discussed and any actions being taken. The need for sub-groups will depend on the scale of activities and the local circumstances of the particular airport.

### **Examples of sub-groups**

- Passenger or user experience group: can monitor passenger facilities and procedures, identify any gaps in services or issues arising from passenger experiences and make recommendations for improvement. They can also provide a passenger perspective on airport developments, particularly at the design stage.
- Noise and track keeping group: to oversee the airport's production of statistics, information and complaint handling relating to aircraft noise and assist the airport to improve the impact of aircraft noise on the community around the airport.
- Committee Steering Group: can be formed from a representative selection of members from the main committee to give preliminary consideration to new or major issues and make recommendations for the agenda of the main committee as well as deal with urgent matters on behalf of the main committee.
- Ad-hoc groups: committees could consider convening a temporary sub-group to deal with specific issues that arise, such as changing the committee's terms of reference or dealing with a new airport development.

## **Preparation**

### **Agenda and Papers**

- 3.11** If possible all members should make available to the committee (through the Secretary) at as early a date as possible details of any matter of concern to that member which he or she wishes to raise at a meeting of the committee. Provided that a matter is within the terms of reference, it is recommended that all committee members be able to propose agenda items for discussion. However, there may be times where a case can be made not to accept an item, for instance if it involves an issue that has been discussed fully at a

previous meeting where there is no new information and further discussion would not be constructive.

- 3.12** Papers should be circulated well in advance to allow representatives to prepare fully and obtain technical advice if necessary. The secretariat will need to ensure that the circulation of papers does not breach copyright, privacy or data protection.

### **Items for Discussion**

- 3.13** The issues that committees discuss will vary from meeting to meeting and from aerodrome to aerodrome, some will be standing items on agendas while others will be in response to ad hoc issues that arise. There should be an appropriate balance of issues discussed at meetings.

- Updates from airport management on operations at the airport, including passenger numbers and new services, runway utilisation, complaints, noise and track keeping
- Updates from local authorities on local plans and policies that may impact upon the airport
- Community noise and local air quality monitoring
- Passenger service issues
- Noise insulation schemes
- Surface access
- Airport development
- Airspace changes<sup>5</sup>
- Noise Action Plans<sup>6</sup>
- Responding to consultations
- Community initiatives
- Updates from any sub-groups

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<sup>5</sup> Airport Consultative Committees are listed as one of those who should be consulted with on airspace changes where there is potential for significant detrimental impact in the 'Guidance to the Civil Aviation Authority on environmental objectives relating to the exercise of its air navigation functions'

<sup>6</sup> Where relevant.

## Proceedings

### Participation

**3.14** Members should be given guidance on how the committee works as well as the standards of behaviour expected of consultative committee members. To ensure the effective operation of the committee it may be considered useful to have a commitment from all members, including airport management, the Chair and the Secretary, to participate actively in the work and discussions of the committee. To help with this, we have included a suggested Code of Conduct that can be used and adapted by committees to ensure members understand what is expected of them.

#### **Code of Conduct**

**Respect:** Committee members should treat each other with respect and courtesy at all times.

**Commitment:** Committee members should dedicate sufficient time to prepare for and attend meetings, including seeking advice and views from others in their organisation where appropriate.

**Conflicts of Interest:** Members should identify and declare any conflicts of interest (actual, potential or perceived), particularly where members do not represent an organisation.

**Participation:** Members should participate fully in meetings. They should listen to what others have to say and keep an open mind while contributing constructively to discussions. Actions assigned to members should be fulfilled in a timely manner and progress reported back at the next meeting.

**Openness and Accountability:** Members should be open and accountable to each other and the organisations and communities they represent about their work on the committee.

**Confidentiality:** Members should respect the status of any confidential issues they discuss.

### Discussion

**3.15** During meetings it is important that members should be given adequate opportunity to represent the views of those whom they represent and that no organisation or one group should dominate proceedings. Chairs should ensure discussion is on

topic while members should make their point in a concise and constructive manner.

## **Voting**

**3.16** It is expected that matters would be resolved by consensus. In general, the Chairman should avoid taking votes on matters other than those relating to the membership of the committee and its sub-groups.

## **Minutes and Actions**

**3.17** The minutes of the meeting should be concise, but representative of the issues and views discussed. Committee publications should reflect the range of views and advice and/or recommendations to the airport operator put forward by members and should not merely reflect the majority viewpoint on any issue. Actions should also be recorded and followed up on at subsequent meetings.

## **Complaints**

**3.18** While the airport should have an agreed formal procedure for recording complaints about aircraft noise as well as passenger service issues, committees are well placed to monitor trends or patterns of complaints (both noise related and from customers), to consider specific issues (for example how the airport responds to persistent complainants), and to monitor the airport's ongoing performance in dealing with complaints. The number, and for noise complaints general location, should be made available to the committee.

**3.19** Passenger complaints could be reviewed by a passenger services sub-committee if the committee has established one.

**3.20** Airports might suggest that complainants, if dissatisfied with the airport response on a matter of wider interest, could contact the committee to raise the matter for discussion. However, it should be remembered that the consultative committee is not an arbiter of last resort, and its recommendations are not binding on the aerodrome. So, it should not be the committee's function to investigate individual complaints as a matter of routine.

## Disputes

**3.21** Disputes involving members of the committee or the working of the committee should be handled within the committee in the first instance. While the Department wishes to see committees work effectively, it is expected that in the majority of instances a solution should be found at the local level. It is the airport that has the ultimate statutory responsibility for ensuring the three discrete groups identified at section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 are consulted equally and therefore has an interest in ensuring committees are working effectively.

## 4. Sharing Best Practice and Knowledge

### Sharing best practice

- 4.1 The sharing of best practice and information between consultative committees is strongly encouraged. For committees at larger airports, the [Liaison Group of UK Airport Consultative Committees](#) (UKACCs) is an ideal way to do this.
- 4.2 For committees at smaller aerodromes, sharing best practice on an informal and ad hoc basis may be appropriate. To facilitate this, committees should ensure their contact details are available on their websites.
- 4.3 All committees are encouraged to welcome members of other committees who wish to see examples of other committees in action by observing meetings. Committees should also consider working together on issues of common interest by sharing information or ways of handling specific issues.

### Sharing knowledge

- 4.4 Committees should also work with other organisations on issues where they have specific expertise to offer. This could include working with Local Authorities to inform Local Plans; the CAA on consumer issues through its Consumer Panel; or with the Department for Transport on specific policy issues.
- 4.5 When responding to consultations as a committee, the response should show where there is agreement between the different interests represented on the committee as well as the range of views held on an issue.
- 4.6 It is recognised that the Department, CAA and NATS should also proactively engage with consultative committees on issues of common interest.