

Improving environmental performance

The aviation industry has broadly acknowledged the need for aviation to tackle its contribution to greenhouse gas emissions and a range of projects are underway world-wide to help reduce this and other environmental impacts that result from air travel.

Any future growth in aviation will have to be sustainable; in the long-term, progress will be made to achieve this by developing more efficient aircraft, powered by more sustainable fuels and using the best possible procedures and infrastructure.



Many of these efforts require the cooperation and support of the Government and the regulator. We therefore recognise that we have a role to play. At the beginning of the year under review the CAA started work on developing our environmental strategy. We consulted with those we regulate and those affected by our regulation, and in July we held a seminar with participation from industry, environmental groups and other bodies.

In January we published a draft policy statement, “CAA and the Environment”, setting out the CAA’s position on the environment, together with a comprehensive programme of action.

Since then we have continued to gather feedback from as many parties as possible. That feedback has been generally supportive, with suggestions on how the CAA should clarify its role and how the programme can feed into larger projects. A final document will be published this summer.

The Future Airspace Strategy (FAS) was published in 2011 and aims to deliver significant airspace efficiencies. A major UK deliverable as part of the Single European Sky programme, FAS will aim to make the best possible use of aircraft performance and the latest technology to make sure flights are using the most efficient route to their destination, minimising fuel burn and environmental impact.

Also, in November, the CAA proposed a new flight efficiency metric for air traffic control provider NATS, to incentivise environmentally efficient management of airspace. Savings in carbon dioxide emissions equivalent to around 3,000 flights between London

and New York are expected over the next three years compared to “business as usual”, with bonus or penalty payments depending on NATS’ performance.

The CAA’s proposal is based on several years of development work by NATS responding to requests from its airline customers. It will establish a comprehensive and developed incentive regime to encourage the most environmentally efficient use of airspace. In addition to the carbon savings, it is expected that if NATS meets the new targets it could save airlines up to £120m in fuel costs over the next three years.

The CAA has also continued to provide technical advice to the Government on the EU Emissions Trading System during 2011/12, helping with aviation’s incorporation into the wider system in January 2012.

We have continued to work with the Government to seek to ensure that we have the right tools to address environmental issues and we are pleased that the Government has proposed to strengthen our ability to enable better environmental performance through the publication of environmental information. Proposals to place a duty on the CAA to publish relevant environmental information were included in the Civil Aviation Bill currently under consideration in Parliament and we are hopeful that these will become law in the forthcoming year.

Key environmental aims and achievements:

Consumers have access to accurate, comparable information about the environmental impacts of their travel choices.

The CAA has worked with the Government to develop legislative proposals to enable us to drive outcomes by publishing environmental information.

Substantial progress has been made towards delivering new solutions for routing aircraft through airspace and enabling new take-off and landing trajectory improvements that will deliver emissions reductions and reduced fuel costs.

The publication of the UK’s Future Airspace Strategy and the subsequent work with industry to develop an implementation programme for the project will put in place the building blocks to deliver substantial efficiency and emissions gains for the UK. Proposing a new target for air traffic service provider NATS that aims to deliver carbon dioxide emissions savings equivalent to around 3,000 flights between London and New York over the next three years.

An increasing number of initiatives to reduce environmental impacts are being developed, tested and progressed towards implementation.

The publication of a draft of the CAA’s environmental strategy and subsequent stakeholder consultation will lead to a coordinated set of initiatives.