

CAA Environmental and Sustainability Panel Meeting Minutes

10:30 – 16:00 17 September 2025

Attendees

Ruth Mallors-Ray (RMR) *Panel Chair*
Alastair Lewis (AL)
Anil Namdeo (AN)
Brian Pearce (BP)
Charlotte Clark (CC)
David Lee (DL)
Mark Westwood (MW)
Martin Hawley (MH)
Ralitsa Hiteva (RH)
Matthew Cherry (MC) CAA, (Item 2)
Harry Armstrong (HA) CAA, (Items 3, 4 and 6)
Ben Bouzon (BB) CAA, (Item 5)
Ed Weston (EW) CAA, (Item 7)
Tim Johnson (TJ) CAA, (Item 10)
Bronwyn Fraser (BF) CAA, Principal, Sustainability Panel Secretariat
Lisa Norris (LN) CAA, Secretariat

Apologies

1. Chair's Welcome and Updates

- Register of Interests – None.
- Draft Minutes of August interim meeting not discussed and will be circulated for approval.
- The Panel's Work Programme was discussed.

2. Economic Regulation of Heathrow

The Panel discussed its support of the CAA Economic Regulation team and its review of Heathrow's H8 Initial Business Plan, including:

- The approach the CAA takes to assessing and regulating Heathrow's capital spending, including that it determines a total envelope within which Heathrow can operate, and that airlines also play a role in approving Heathrow's capex plans.
- The boundaries of what is in Heathrow's control, including that 95% of climate impacts stem from Scope 3 emissions (from airlines), which are outside Heathrow's direct control. The Panel also discussed the levers Heathrow has, to reduce emissions around the airport that contribute to reduced air quality, as well as the expectation that Heathrow will need to take steps to manage air quality (rather than the local authority).
- The importance of long-term planning for sustainability initiatives, rather than only within the five-year price control cycle, and the need to future proof investments.
- The mechanisms the CAA has, to influence Heathrow's sustainability investments, including the reputational and financial incentives framework, and how the Panel can support and challenge the CAA to use these as part of the price control process

3. Airspace Modernisation Strategy (AMS)

The CAA updated the Panel on recent engagement with the AMS team and potential upcoming opportunities for the Panel to support the CAA's work on the sustainability aspects of the AMS, including:

- The annual AMS Progress Report; and

- Review of Part 3 of the AMS.

4. Hydrogen Technology and Regulatory Mapping

The Panel updated on its recent engagement with the CAA Hydrogen team to support knowledge of developing regulatory roadmaps.

5. Aviation Environmental Review (AER)

The CAA updated the Panel on two aspects of its AER work:

- The AER roadmap – the Panel supported the CAA’s development of its initial AER roadmap, due for publication in September. BB acknowledged that while not comprehensive, the roadmap was a first step to give a sense of direction and how the CAA will use the AER to drive sustainability in aviation. BB noted the CAA would be seeking the Panel’s support and challenge to develop a more detailed long-term plan for the AER, using this roadmap as the basis for that.
- On the AER 2025, which is due for publication by the end of November. The report is intended to retain the structure of the AER 2023 but will be more granular. BB noted the Panel’s support as the CAA develops its views on its analysis of its noise and emissions databases, once complete, would be appreciated.

The Panel reiterated its consistent message that the AER is a key lever and tool for the CAA in aviation sustainability, and that the CAA should invest more resources to accelerate environmental reporting.

6. Update on delivery of CAA Environmental Sustainability Strategy

HA provided an update on the delivery of the CAA’s Environmental Sustainability Strategy, including upcoming work on noise insulation schemes which is currently being scoped by the CAA.

7. Drone Noise and Local Planning Authorities

EW presented on the CAA’s drone noise measurement work and how this knowledge may be shared to provide input into planning decisions. The Panel discussed:

- The different sorts of noise created by different sorts of future flight technologies (including drones and EVTOLs).
- The value of noise attitude surveys, that understand how noise impacts people and public health, and how the CAA can play a role in influencing these to be undertaken around drone noise.
- The importance of any such surveys being independent and how they could be funded.
- Understanding how noise surveys have been carried out in other industries, such as wind turbines, and the value in the CAA collaborating with others to ensure consistency in noise surveys.
- How the CAA could build noise data gathering into its regulatory sandbox processes to ensure an understanding of drone noise is built in from an early testing stage alongside safety testing.
- Whether public health should be considered as part of the consideration of safety.

8. Developing a CAA position on ‘Good Growth’

The Panel discussed how the CAA could consider ‘good growth’ in the context of a generic airport expansion from an environmental perspective. The Panel discussed:

- How airport expansion is framed as a potential contributor to growth. The Panel discussed a critical review of the assumptions that may be used to underpin commonly cited economic

assessments of the impacts of expansion (including cost benefit analyses and the calculation of GDP), and how these may not accurately capture and account for the environmental impacts of growth.

- How environmental effects should be considered as part of measuring growth and productivity – for example, how employees taking sick leave due to noise and air pollution or how a flooded road (caused by extreme weather due to climate change) reduce productivity. The Panel noted that current approaches to GDP do not account for the costs of public health, such as the longer-term impacts of noise on health that then incur a cost to address. That uncertainties related to public health do not necessarily need to be considered differently to other elements of a cost benefit analysis that may be uncertain.
- That there should be consideration of ways to utilise an expanded airport that would not lead to an overall increase in environmental harm, especially around air pollution and noise – for example, through utilising the additional capacity on the ground to reduce taxiing delays.
- The importance of the CAA being joined up in its work to think about the whole aviation system – including airspace - where it has decision making powers and influence, as part of its consideration of what ‘good growth’ may look like.

9. Panel Commissioned Papers: Contrails and Climate Impact

The Panel discussed its next commissioned paper as part of its current work programme, agreeing to provide the CAA with insights on contrails.

DL provided a scientific overview of contrails, explaining their formation and possible climate impact. DL discussed the complexities and uncertainties of contrail prediction and mitigation and cautioned against simplistic contrail avoidance strategies and that had the impact of increasing fuel burn (leading to a known climate impact through carbon emissions). He also noted the importance of distinguishing between visible contrails and those with significant radiative forcing. The Panel discussed the importance of robust evidence, and that the undertaking of any trials should be framed carefully so as not necessarily be viewed as legitimising any proposed contrail avoidance strategy.

The Panel agreed that it was a key part of their role to provide the CAA with insights on contrails through its next commissioned paper, focussing on highlighting the importance of robust evidence gathering to build scientific certainty in the understanding of the impact of contrails, and the CAA’s consumer protection role where consumers may incur additional costs claiming to offset emissions and reduce contrails and potential reputational implications for the CAA should there not be sufficient scientific evidence to back this cost to consumers.

10. CAA Strategic Overview

TJ updated the panel on recent ministerial changes, the reform of UK regulators and how they can work more effectively and incentivise better behaviour and the importance of the Panel’s support for the development of the CAA’s Aviation Environmental Review work. TJ emphasised the need for better integration of environmental considerations into regulatory frameworks and the role of the CAA in shaping policy through its reporting function.

11. Panel Internal Conference – January 2026

The Panel discussed the development of its January 2026 internal conference for the CAA. The Panel considered a draft agenda featuring discussion and information sharing with the CAA on SAF, contrails and the environmental implications of airport expansion.

