DRAFT Minutes of Environmental Sustainability Panel Meeting

18 September 2026, Westferry House, 10:30-16:00

1. Welcome and Introductions, Review of Actions and Previous Advice Notes
The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. The Minutes from the interim online panel meeting on August 26 were approved. The Minutes of the interim panel meeting are not published. Some changes to the format of the published minutes of 16 July were agreed. These do not change any content and are just formatting.

The Panel reviewed actions and matter arising.

Action 1, to hold a Panel workshop on improving CAA Board engagement remains open, although this is in hand for 14 October.

Actions 2 and 3 were deemed closed. Panel members have commented on the Panel's annual report for 2025/26 and future work programme. The CAA will now finalise the annual report to be signed off by the Panel Chair.

The Panel reviewed progress on Action 4, an advice note the Panel is preparing for the CAA relating to the draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement. Members discussed strengthening the paper by including commentary on the economic test (including referencing DfT's approach to assessing the costs and benefits of expansion), referencing Climate Change Committee (CCC) advice and including links to inputs given by Panel members to the Transport Committee's inquiry into the HENPS. It was agreed to restructure the paper with key messages and conclusions first and supporting evidence and context afterwards. The advice note will be finalised and prepared for submission to the CAA Board by Friday the 9th of October.

Action 5 remains open. Work by Panel members to produce an advice note on greenhouse gas removals and aviation decarbonisation was reported to be on track, to be delivered by end of 2026.

Action 7, for Panel members to provide further comparator analysis for the forthcoming AER publication was also closed.

Action 8. The Chair reported that she had a meeting scheduled with the CAA ARAC Chair to discuss how sustainable aviation to treated in the CAA risk analysis and would report back to the Panel.

The Chair provided an update on meetings held since the last meeting.

The Panel then discussed the implications of the latest Climate Change Committee advice Members highlighted the importance of understanding differences in carbon valuation methodologies used across government departments. The Panel also

discussed the risks associated with aviation relying on carbon and air quality savings delivered by other sectors and noted concerns that the deployment of technology and carbon removals required to mitigate aviation's environmental impacts may be more challenging than previously assumed. Members further discussed whether constraints on airport capacity could influence airline fleet and operational decisions, including the potential use of larger aircraft. Members proposed additional references to CCC advice in Panel advice notes to the CAA.

The Panel discussed its role in engaging with parties outside the CAA. The Panel discussed that while their role and remit is entirely to support the CAA in its sustainability work, there may be times when there is some scope to engaging with external parties to support the CAA in improving its own engagement and processes. This will only be done where the CAA specifically requests such support. The Panel agreed that their role in engagement with external parties was not to circumvent or interfere with the CAA's own legal processes or to be lobbied.

2. Environmental Sustainability Strategy Update, from CAA Head of Sustainability

The Panel were introduced to the new CAA Head of Sustainability Research and Policy, who set out their plans to develop a strategic sustainability research programme, identify evidence gaps and explore the CAA's role in research across air quality, climate, noise, biodiversity and adaptation.

The CAA are engaging with DfT on the review of the Jet Zero Strategy and participating in the Operation Blue Skies Advisory Panel.

The Panel discussed interim targets, consumer information and the potential for collaboration with EU or other European countries to strengthen the CAA's lever, and alignment with CCC advice.

Members stressed that the scientific uncertainty remains significant, contrail impacts should not be over-simplified and operational trials may be valuable but should not be interpreted as proof of climate benefit.

3. CAA Climate Adaptation Programme Update, from the Climate Adaptation Manager

The Panel received a presentation of the evolving CAA climate adaptation programme and the Panel's input on the scope, ambition and approach was sought.

The programme objectives were set out as:

1. Improve understanding of climate risks.
2. Build resilience across aviation.
3. Define and strengthen the CAA's adaptation role.

Members discussed:

- Considering the IPCC confidence levels as a scientifically credible and key source of information to understand levels of uncertainty about future weather under different increases in global temperatures.
- Increasing the CAA's role in influencing research, in particular engaging with research councils.
- Challenging the CAA to be more ambitious in being a leader in this area by convening its available experts with its Chairman, CEO and Board to agree to immediate actions on how and where it can influence.
- How the CAA could more clearly articulate the scope and ambition of its climate adaptation programme to prioritise where to act.
- How the CAA could reposition climate adaptation as a financial sustainability, safety and economic growth issue, including using annual audit cycles and business continuity plans to understand how aviation businesses are adapting to climate change and how the CAA can influence those regulations and frameworks (including by convening a roundtable of financial regulators, auditors and insurance companies).
- The importance of the CAA dedicating more resource to its climate adaptation work to be able to be ambitious.

4. Sustainability Framework for Emerging Technologies, from the CAA's Sustainability Principal and Technical Strategy Analyst

The CAA presented work underway to embed sustainability considerations into its work with innovative technologies, especially around higher airspace operations as a current area of particular focus.

The Panel recommended use of a simple traffic-light (RAG) assessments against climate impacts, public health impacts, and climate adaptation considerations. The CAA should consider who contributes to these RAG assessments to ensure they are independent and informed by expert view and that they should provide appropriate evidence to underpin the assessment.

The Panel also suggested prioritising CAA's sustainability consideration in terms of anticipated timeline of development, rate of inclusion into operating fleet and likely future market. The Panel noted it would be keen to be involved in supporting the CAA to gain more depth in its thinking on particular new technologies as the lifecycle of development evolves. The Panel also encouraged the CAA to embed sustainability considerations as part of other issues, such as safety, finance or security.

5. CAA Annual Strategic Objectives (ASOs), from the CAA Head of Strategy

The CAA's upcoming process for setting its Annual Strategic Objectives was outlined and the Panel's input to support the CAA Board's thinking was sought.

The Panel challenged the link between the CAA's current mission ('protecting people, enabling aerospace') and how this flowed into the ASOs, including their views that 'protecting people' should not be limited to protecting consumers but extended to protecting the public. 'Enabling aerospace' should be applied through the ASOs to enabling aerospace to grow sustainably (both environmentally and financially). The Panel challenged the CAA to consider how to more clearly integrate and connect the mission to the ASOs.

Panel members emphasised sustainability could be embedded across all ASOs, not treated separately and with greater recognition of public health, climate adaptation, community impacts and environmental risks to growth and resilience.

Members emphasised the need to better integrate sustainability, public health, climate adaptation and environmental resilience across the strategic framework.

The Panel agreed that its discussion should be distilled into a short briefing note for the Board to support its consideration of sustainability issues as part of the ASO development process.

Action: The Head of Strategy agreed to prepare a draft note summarising the Panel's views for review by the Chair prior to submission to the Board.

6. Aviation Environmental Review (AER) Update from Head of Environmental Reporting

The CAA AER team provided updates of the AER 2026 publication and sought Panel views in the areas of:

- Noise modelling
- Air quality analysis
- Emissions reporting

Noise Modelling

The Head of Environmental Reporting updated the Panel that six of eight airport assessments completed, additional work was underway for gaining data from Luton and Glasgow airports and analysis using lower noise annoyance thresholds is expected to show significantly larger affected populations.

Air Quality Methodology and Presentation

A Panel Member noted that comparisons between 2019 and 2024 could be vulnerable to criticism because aviation activity was uniquely affected by COVID-19, potentially masking longer-term emissions trends. Members recommended clear explanations of year-to-year comparisons and consideration of additional sensitivity analysis using earlier baseline years.

Air Quality Concentration Reporting

The Panel reviewed proposals to assess annual average NO_2 concentrations at major airports. Key recommendations included:

- Clearly distinguishing emissions from concentrations.
- Explicitly stating that annual averages are being reported.
- Ensuring readers understand that annual averages may not capture short-term peaks and exceedances.
- Clarifying whether monitoring data reflects conditions within airport boundaries or surrounding areas.
- Avoiding language that could imply direct causation between aircraft activity levels and measured concentration changes where other sources, particularly road traffic, may contribute significantly.

Airport-Level Reporting

The Panel reviewed proposed airport-specific case study pages.

Members highlighted that reductions in local air pollution concentrations may be driven principally by improvements in road vehicle emissions rather than aviation-specific reductions and cautioned against interpretations that could be perceived as misleading.

Geographic Coverage and Monitoring

The Panel discussed limitations associated with monitoring station locations around airports.

Recommendations included:

- Reviewing whether monitoring locations accurately represent surrounding communities.
- Consulting air quality experts to validate geographic coverage and interpretation.
- Exploring future use of modelling techniques to supplement monitoring data and improve spatial coverage.
- Considering environmental justice implications where monitoring infrastructure may be unevenly distributed.

Overall view on AER Progress

The Panel expressed strong support for the work completed by the AER team and recognised substantial progress in maturity, analytical depth and presentation quality compared with previous reports.

Members agreed the report now represented one of the strongest examples of Panel influence and impact within the CAA.

The Panel discussed whether environmental impacts reported within the AER could be expressed in monetary terms. Members acknowledged that Department for Transport TAG methodologies could provide monetised values. The Panel broadly

supported exploring monetisation in future years but did not recommend incorporating it into the forthcoming edition of the AER.

8. Panel Discussion, October Workshop on Board Engagement

The Panel discussed plans for a dedicated October workshop focused on improving engagement between the Environmental Sustainability Panel and the CAA Board.

Members noted that existing meeting minutes alone are unlikely to provide sufficient visibility of Panel contributions and that more targeted reporting products may be required.

The Panel discussed wider organisational attitudes towards sustainability and environmental risk. Members observed that a clearly defined sustainability risk appetite could help:

- Shape Board decision-making.
- Improve strategic alignment.
- Provide greater clarity for executives and policy teams.
- Strengthen consideration of long-term environmental risks.

Several members considered this to be a potentially important area for future Panel engagement with the Board. The Chair had a meeting with the CAA ARAC Chair on the 24th of September to discuss how sustainable aviation to treated in the CAA risk analysis and would report back to the Panel.

Closure of meeting

The Chair thanked Panel members, CAA colleagues and presenters for their contributions for the meeting.

The meeting closed at 16:00.