Policy challenge paper:

THE FUTURE OF AVIATION

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ADEPT

The Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport

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THE FUTURE OF AVIATION

Since May 2019, when the UK Parliament declared an 'environment and climate emergency', environmental issues have skyrocketed to the top of all government agendas.

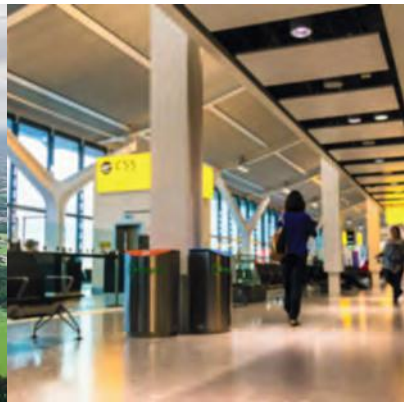
The environmental impact of the aviation sector is under intense scrutiny, but at the same time, aviation is inextricably linked with economic growth.

If we are to be an outward-looking trading nation now that we have left the EU, aviation will be vital, but at what environmental cost? How do we balance the need for airport expansion with the needs of the community? Emerging new technologies are starting to revolutionise how we connect people with place, but there is still a long way to go.

ADEPT has a significant role in the development of the aviation industry. An airport's impact goes far wider than its boundary fence - local authorities lead on air quality, congestion, integrating transport systems, regeneration and development, while working with partners and stakeholders across the sector, businesses and communities. However, with more than half of the UK's local authorities to date declaring climate emergencies and the recent refusal of a planning application to enable the expansion of Bristol Airport by North Somerset Council, aviation is a complex issue. Bordering local authorities may have opposing views on a regional airport, and straightforward economic arguments no longer dominate the decision making-process.

[1] https://www.sustainableaviation.co.uk/



Working with the Local Government Technical Advisors Group (LGTAG), ADEPT has brought together the most pressing questions for the aviation sector from our members' perspective. We urge the Government to develop a national strategy to enable clean growth and to meet our national commitment to decarbonisation.

- **Aviation is an essential part of the UK transport mix. How do we create a sustainable transport network that provides real alternatives to flying and that actively promotes, incentivises and educates people on these options? Simultaneously, how do we allow new technologies to enable sustainable aviation?**

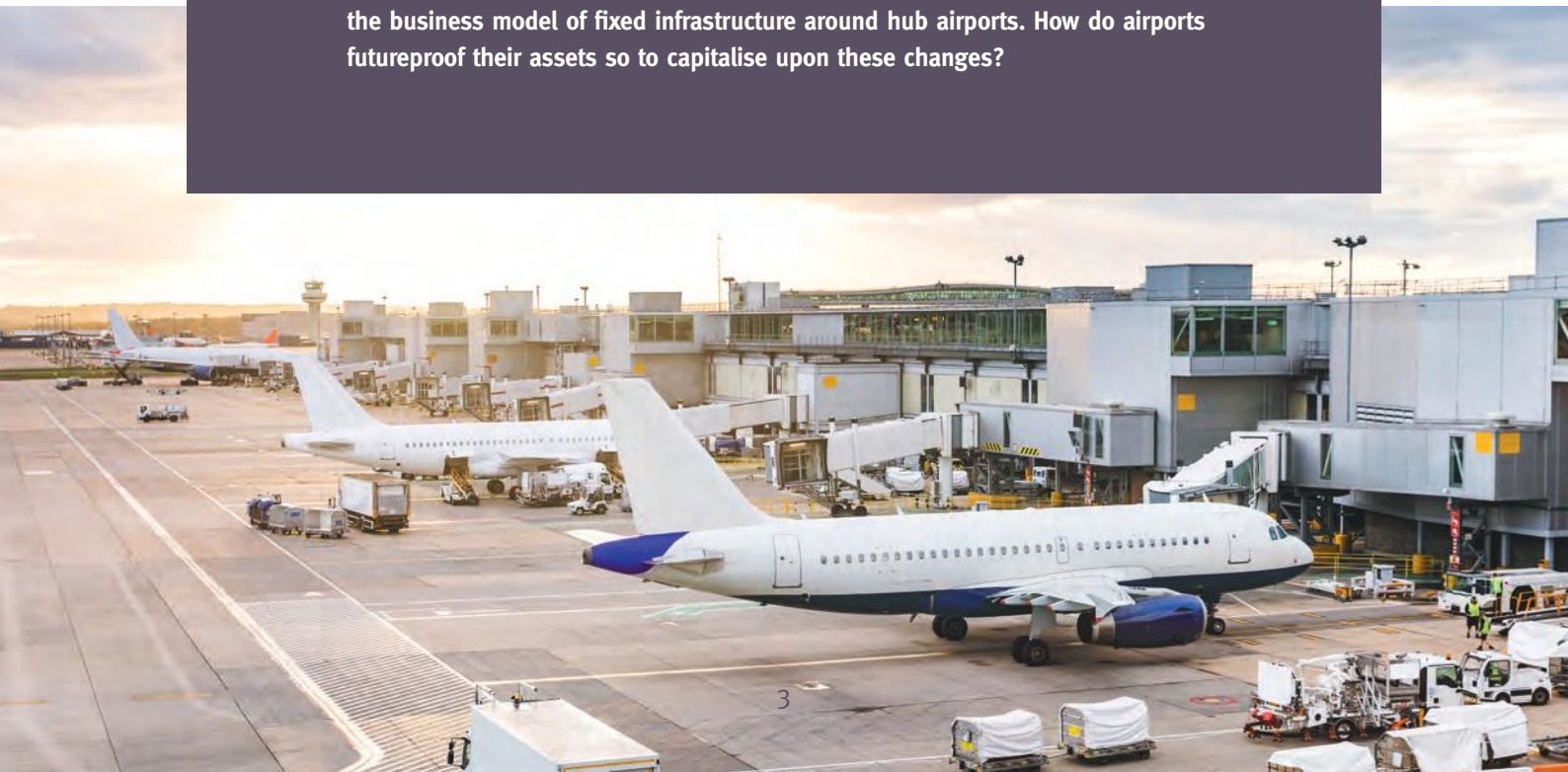
- **The UK is the first G7 country to legislate for net zero emissions by 2050. A roadmap published by the Sustainable Aviation[1] industry coalition suggests that the sector believes it can accommodate 70% increase in passengers by 2050 and achieve net zero emissions. The Committee for Climate Change (CCC) in turn suggests this is "highly unlikely to be feasible by 2050". How do we embed realistic and measurable climate change imperatives into emerging aviation policy across a predominantly commercial sector?**

- **Delivering on the promise of 2050 will require a fundamental shift in policy and funding. How do we create new funding models that will enable innovation, decarbonisation and an integrated transport system?**

- **Existing regional aviation infrastructure is an undervalued asset and has real potential to become hubs for sustainable change. How do we enable hub airports to become testbeds for sustainable aviation, enabling greater connectivity, accessibility and the movement of freight to transform local economies?**

- **The freight industry is becoming ever more dependent on aviation. How can we balance this economic dependence with environmental impact?**

- **Technological innovations and new modes of transport could significantly disrupt the business model of fixed infrastructure around hub airports. How do airports futureproof their assets so to capitalise upon these changes?**




ADEPT believes the aviation sector needs a national strategy, one that is part of a UK-wide strategy for transport.
If we truly want to lead the way in balancing environmental costs with the economic benefits of aviation growth, we need to challenge ourselves to change. We need clean growth.
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The Dilemma

There is a need for tangible and visionary action from the UK aviation sector, which has a real opportunity to lead locally and influence globally. The aspirations of the sector must be balanced with the interests of the whole nation, with the arguments for shorter term economic prosperity considered in the context of a potential longer-term climate emergency.

The UK has the largest aviation network in Europe and the third largest in the world. Aviation directly contributes approximately £22 billion to the economy and supports around half a million jobs. Record quantities of freight were handled by UK airports in 2017, highlighting the growing importance of aviation to the freight industry.

- **Climate change is also driving economic growth - low carbon technology and clean energy contribute £44.5 billion to the UK economy every year[2]. Emerging technologies, including sustainable aviation fuels and electric flight, could have potentially positive impacts on the aviation sector, if given more consideration. The Government should work with the aviation sector to establish the UK as a global aviation innovation hub. As advised by the CCC however, a comprehensive understanding of green aviation technology applicability, maturity and uptake should be sought before technology developments are used as a justification for continued sector growth.**

- **Aviation policy must look beyond the sector and feed into the wider government ambition for tackling inequalities, ensuring that all parts of Britain can share future growth. Major hub airports can dominate policy development due to their economic significance, but equally, regional airports provide economic clusters and support transformational benefits which require consideration.**

- **Regional hubs could transform short haul flights, improving connectivity, supporting sustainable aviation and the movement of freight around the country, but lack the political support and investment to effect change. They could become early adopters of low and zero emission aviation, acting as test beds for innovation and driving sustainable change.**

- **Local government needs genuine powers and influence to manage and mitigate impacts relating from surface access to airports, such as air quality and congestion, while also promoting the creation and integration of appropriate transport systems and initiatives that enable airports and affected communities to develop concurrently.**

- **Central government and sub-national transport bodies can work with airport providers and local councils to encourage new and innovative funding models, and develop a more collaborative, partnership-based approach to balance economic, environmental and community needs, with the development of new or existing infrastructure.**

[2] Office for National Statistics (2019). Low carbon and renewable energy economy, UK. [online] Ons.gov.uk. Available at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/environmentalaccounts/bulletins/finalestimates/2017 [Accessed 3 Sep. 2019].

- **Government aviation policy must reflect decarbonisation targets and place greater emphasis on creating alternatives to aviation travel to reduce reliance on the sector, rather than relying on carbon offset programs. The Government should continue to develop alternative, lower carbon transport modes that provide an equivalent journey / convenience experience and consider a mechanism to discourage air travel. Levying a fuel tax, such as implemented by USA, Canada and Japan, for example, could be a phased alternative to Air Passenger Duty and subsequently could be ringfenced for research investment into greener technologies and creating alternatives to aviation travel.**

- **Due to the intrinsic global nature of aviation, the Government must continue to address the aviation sector's emission crisis on an international platform to help coordinate international decarbonisation approaches and ensure that the UK avoids competitive distortion and carbon leakage (where emissions simply move to other airlines on the same or similar routes).**

The extent of the current opportunity to decarbonise the aviation sector has been outlined by both industry and the CCC. But at present, there is a mismatch in aspirations and opinions relating to the extent passenger growth can be sustained up to 2050, while pursuing a net-zero emissions agenda.

In turn there are currently no definitive targets on how the Government plans to facilitate sustainable aviation growth to 2050.

Therefore, in response to both industry and CCC publications, Government needs to establish definitive, transparent and challenging targets (with appropriate milestones) to provide consistency across the agenda, so that planned growth assumed within the long-term trajectory continues, and to ensure improvements are made to meet the UK's sustainability goals.

Currently there are limited mechanisms of tracking the long-term performance of the aviation sector and therefore no means of mandating corrective action if these goals are not achieved.

Our policy challenge to the Government is to consider whether its decisions on strategic national infrastructure and associated growth plans adequately reflects the need to tackle climate change.

- **ADEPT members are the place-making strategists and policy shapers across top tier local authority areas**
- **ADEPT members are specialists, delivering services and sharing best practice across key sectors including environment, planning, housing, transport and economy**
- **ADEPT members design strategies for the future, taking communities beyond 2035**
- **ADEPT members operate in networks, cutting through boundaries to work with partners across the political, public, private and community sectors**
- **ADEPT members provide opportunities to develop new talent, supporting the Place Directors of tomorrow**

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www.adeptnet.org.uk

LGTAG The Local Government Technical Advisers Group

The Local Government Technical Advisors Group (LGTAG) provides comprehensive and co-ordinated advice and support to senior technical professionals across local government and supply chain partners. As a technical body, it is focused on how to use technological change to drive positive transformation across our communities and tackle some of the biggest challenges we face.