

THE FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF AIR TRANSPORT IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: NORTH OF ENGLAND

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report outlines the main points of the Government's consultation on the Future Development of Air Transport in the United Kingdom, and makes recommendations which Members may wish to endorse as the Council's response to the consultation.

2. Background

- 2.1 In July, 2002, the Department for Transport issued seven regional consultation documents concerning issues surrounding future air transport development. The relevant edition for Wirral is the North of England which covers the regions of the North West, North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.
- 2.2 The documents cover the period to 2030 and the deadline for comments is 30 November, 2002. The Government will use the consultation as part of the preparation of an Air Transport White Paper, a commitment made in the 1998 Transport White Paper.
- 2.3 A clear policy framework for air transport is considered necessary in view of the expected increase in demand for air travel and because the absence of a national policy up to now has meant that airport development has evolved in a piecemeal fashion. European competitors have airport strategies in place, making them better placed to cater for future demand.
- 2.4 The document itself is 255 pages long, and sets out a number of possible future scenarios and their implications, but without expressing any preferences. It poses a number of specific questions related to airport growth and the options concerning the location of new infrastructure.

3. The Current North of England Situation

- 3.1 Over the past decade there has been a doubling of the number of passengers at North of England airports - from 13 to 26 million passengers per annum (mppa). This represents a growth rate of 8% per year, compared to 7% per year at south east airports.
- 3.2 Half of this growth was at Manchester, but Liverpool John Lennon Airport (LJLA) has also experienced significant growth, albeit from a small base. Indeed, the growth rate at LJLA has been 17.7% per year, largely due to the development over the last few years of "no frills" carriers EasyJet and Ryanair. LJLA also handles large amounts of freight and is the key hub in the North of England for Royal Mail services.

4. Regional Policy Scenarios

4.1 Potential future demand for regional airports has been tested against four policy scenarios:-

- **RASCO (Regional Air Services Co-ordination) Reference Case (RRC).** This assumes continuation of existing policies and is the baseline for 2030. The scenario allows for 300 mppa in the south east by 2030.
- **South East Constrained (SEC).** This would allow growth at regional airports but would constrain the south east to that already allowed for in the planning system (150 mppa)
- **UK-wide Constrained (UKC).** This would constrain all airports to that which is already allowed for in the planning system.
- **Facilitating Growth (FG).** This would allow unconstrained growth across the UK, and indeed encourage it through the planning system.

4.2 Additionally, two spatial scenarios are discussed, which address the distribution of demand for air services between regional airports:-

- **“Fly Local” Scenario** - all regional airports would compete to provide a minimum network of core services to key European centres and hubs. This would assume growth at all airports, but larger airports would be unable to reach a demand level for non-core services which could lead to a poorer level of service across the region as a whole.
- **“Concentrated Growth” Scenario** - would direct growth to a limited number of airports, with feeder services from smaller airports. In the North of England, two possibilities are put forward - either concentrating growth only at Manchester, or else at Manchester, Leeds/Bradford and Newcastle to create growth in each region.

5. Air Traffic Forecasts

5.1 Air travel is expected to increase overall. At national level, the number of passengers is expected to increase from 180 mppa in 2000 to between 400 mppa and 600 mppa in 2030. For the purposes of the forecasts tabled below, under each of the scenarios, the mid-point of the national range is taken.

	RRC			SEC		UKC		FG	
	2000	2015	2030	2015	2030	2015	2030	2015	2030
Manchester									
Mppa	18.35	39.0	60.0	42.3	65.0	34.8	39.8	39.0	55.0
ATMs*	178.5	282	365	293	377	260	297	290	404
Newcastle									
Mppa	3.15	6.3	9.0	5.7	8.2	5.7	5.8	6.4	9.4
ATMs	43.9	61	81	56	73	54	55	61	81
Leeds-Bradford									
mppa	1.58	4.0	6.7	3.1	6.0	2.4	2.4	3.1	7.0
ATMs	29.3	47	71	37	65	31	31	37	87

Liverpool JLA	1.98	5.5	8.6	5.8	11.1	3.6	3.6	5.4	8.4			
mppa	32.4	85	115	63	116	59	59	83	113			
ATMs												
Teeside	0.6	2.0	3.0	2.5	3.8	1.5	1.5	2.6	4.1			
mppa	12	27	36	20	26	21	21	20	51			
ATMs												
Humber-side	0.45	0.8	1.6	0.9	2.2	0.8	0.8	0.7	1.5			
mppa	14.7	15	21	16	24	11	11	12	21			
ATMs												
TOTAL PASSENGERS	26.3		89.4		97.2		85.9		54.6			
% increase compared to 2000 reference case	240%			268%			75%			204%		
Passengers as % of Regional Traffic	49%			43%			43%			45%		
Passengers as % of National Traffic	15%			20%			26%			19%		

Note * ATMs = Air Transport Movements in 000's.

- 5.2 Under all scenarios there is expected to be considerable growth. Even under the most restrictive (UKC), passenger numbers will double by 2030. As expected, the SEC scenario provides the greatest level of growth - up to 11.1 mppa at LJLA.
- 5.3 Further expansion of facilities at both Manchester and LJLA would be required, although only under the SEC scenario may a third runway be required at Manchester towards the end of the period. LJLA runway has sufficient capacity under all scenarios, but may require a runway extension to the east to cater for take-offs of the largest, fully laden, long haul aircraft.
- 5.4 The document discusses surface access to accommodate further growth. Reference is made to the proposed western rail link between Manchester and North Wales and Merseyside, to Allerton Interchange, and to the proposed Merseytram Line 3.
- 5.5 In terms of air freight the following table gives forecasts under each scenario for Manchester and LJLA:- (thousand tonnes)

	1998			RRC			SEC			UKC		
	B	F	M	B	F	M	B	F	M	B	F	M
Manch'r	63	101	4.7	172	493	7.4	207	492	7.4	171	493	7.4
LJLA	0.2	2.5	17	1.2	180	27	1.2	192	27	1.2	178	27

Note: B = Belly Hold F = Freighter M = Mail

6. Implications

- 6.1 **Economy.** Aviation is one of the major strengths of the UK economy. Inward tourism generates around £13 billion to the UK each year, which represents 1.5% of GDP. Nearly 8% of national income comes from exports of services, with aviation's contribution in 2000 being £7.4 billion.
- 6.2 In the North of England aviation directly supports nearly 22,000 jobs, with a further 17,000 being indirectly supported in other parts of the economy. Potentially, a further 33,000 new airport jobs could be created, most of which would be at Manchester. Aviation is also forecast to double its contribution to regional GDP by 2015.

- 6.3 **Safety.** Under all scenarios except UKC, public safety zones (PSZ) at most airports would require enlargement. LJLA would have a substantial part of its enlarged PSZ over built-up areas. The management of air traffic is also a significant issue under all scenarios.
- 6.4 **Noise and Air Quality.** The number of people affected by air traffic noise would increase, and this would be particularly acute at Manchester. Air quality at Manchester would also exceed current limits under the high growth scenarios. Nationally, it is estimated that the increase in air traffic forecast could entail the release of up to an additional 10 million tonnes of CO₂ into the atmosphere.
- 6.5 **Environment.** Specific impacts are not addressed in detail. However, the document acknowledges that Manchester and LJLA are flanked by Sites of Special Scientific Interest. In Liverpool's case this area is also a "Ramsar" site and a Special Protection Area under EU legislation. Any runway extension at LJLA would also encroach into the Green Belt, and the adjacent Speke Hall is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 6.6 **Surface Access.** Substantial congestion is anticipated at many airports by 2015, particularly at Manchester. At LJLA, congestion is forecast on the A5300, A561 and A562, although this could be mitigated with the planned public transport investments.
- 6.7 **Regeneration.** The document acknowledges that the wards adjacent to LJLA experience notable deprivation and that new job opportunities commensurate with airport growth could improve the situation.
- 6.8 **Rail Services.** The document considers whether improved rail services between the North of England and London could provide an alternative to air services. It notes that an upgraded West Coast Main Line could reduce air traffic between Manchester and Heathrow by 30-60%.
- 6.9 Reference is also made to the SRA's investigation into a new north-south high speed rail line. Such a line could reduce air traffic between Leeds-Bradford and London by as much as 40%. High speed rail could produce less CO₂ per passenger km, but the environmental case for rail-air substitution is considered marginal.
- 6.10 **Manchester Hub** Potential for Manchester to become a major international hub is also considered. This could result in the need for a third runway towards the end of the study period. However, this would depend on future decisions in the South East, which could include new runways at Heathrow or Stansted (or both), or a new airport developed at Cliffe Marshes in Kent.
- 6.11 **Strategic Links** The draft Regional Planning Guidance currently being finalised by the ODPM identifies Manchester as the North of England's key international gateway, and recognises the complementary role of other North West airports. The need for improvements to the strategic and local public transport networks at Manchester and LJLA is also highlighted.
- 6.12 The Merseyside Local Transport Plan (LTP) acknowledges the importance of LJLA, including its freight role. The LTP also promotes specific schemes to improve surface access to LJLA, most notably Allerton Interchange and Line 3 of the proposed Merseytram network.
- 6.13 Halton's LTP also supports improved access to LJLA and to Manchester Airport, including improvements to the bus network, through ticketing to the Airport, support for rail links, and promotion of the new Mersey Crossing at Runcorn/Widnes. The last of these is also supported in the Merseyside LTP.

7. Commentary

- 7.1 The document assumes that air travel will continue to grow. Indeed, under the most constrained scenario (UKC) passenger traffic would double in the period. This constitutes a “predict and provide” approach, rather than the normal “plan, monitor and manage”. There is no attempt in the document to manage demand, even though this is a guiding principle with all other forms of transport planning.
- 7.2 There is an apparent conflict between environmental and economic objectives in the document. Whilst the economic benefits of growing air travel is well documented, the report tends to underplay the environmental consequences. Technological improvements have increased the efficiency and environmental performance of aircraft, but increased air traffic will inevitably lead to an increase in the number of people affected by noise, pollution and surface access congestion. The document underplays these consequences.
- 7.3 Air travel is a major generator of CO₂, and it is not apparent how increased air traffic would square with the Government’s target of reducing CO₂ emissions to 20% less than their 1990 levels by 2010, in accordance with the Kyoto Protocol. The true environmental sustainability of the scenarios is unclear and will need to be addressed in far greater detail in the forthcoming White Paper.
- 7.4 In terms of the scenarios, it would appear that the SEC would offer the greatest benefits, as this would deflect growth from the South East into Manchester and Liverpool, and balance aviation growth across the country and spread the economic benefits of air travel.
- 7.5 Conversely, the FG scenario would appear to be the least desirable as it would have the opposite effects to the above. It would entail considerable development of infrastructure and new runways in the South East. Members should be aware that under all scenarios, what happens in the rest of the UK is governed by what happens in the South East. In addition, although constraint in the South East would appear best for the UK as a whole, the South East edition of this UK-wide consultation alone does not take a scenario approach. It takes a mid-point between high and low passenger forecasts (300 million in 2030) and looks at various options for distributing this between airports in the region. This approach is not compatible with constraint in the South East.
- 7.6 In terms of the spatial scenarios, “fly local” is considered more acceptable. All regional airports would have a minimum level of service, and the disbenefits of concentrating activity at specific locations would likely increase. It would encourage complementarity between Manchester and LJLA.
- 7.7 The “concentrating growth” scenario would be less beneficial, particularly if centred on Manchester, which would then continue its main regional role, as acknowledged in RPG. It would lead to a competitive role for LJLA with Manchester. Improved surface access to, and between the two airports would be critical.
- 7.8 Clear and comprehensive national aviation policy should be developed through the forthcoming White Paper, together with clear national policy statements within Planning Policy Guidance. Extensive consultation will be necessary, as airport-related developments raise significant planning and environmental issues at the local level which need to be addressed in detail.
- 7.9 There should be greater efforts to safeguard and expand employment in the UK aviation sector. The document underplays competition from non-UK carriers operating to their hubs from regional UK airports. Additionally, it underestimates the importance of industries such as British Aerospace at Broughton, which is a major employer in the North Wales and Merseyside area.

- 7.10 The document contains proposals to target employment and training opportunities in the aviation industry for residents living in deprived areas. This is to be welcomed, and is especially pertinent to LJLA because of its location in the Speke/Garston area, which experiences significant social exclusion. Conversely, increased noise and pollution from aircraft could undermine efforts to improve the quality of life in this area.
- 7.11 Improved surface access by public transport to airports is a key element within a national aviation strategy. RPG for the North West and the Merseyside LTP seek to improve the accessibility of LJLA by non-car modes. The document acknowledges the role of Allerton Interchange and Merseytram Line 3, and this is to be welcomed.
- 7.12 It also identifies substantial road congestion on the strategic road network in the vicinity of LJLA, but fails to recognise the problem of the Runcorn Bridge. The construction of a new road crossing at this location is supported by the Merseyside and Halton LTP's and could be built as early as 2007.
- 7.13 A complementary role for LJLA and Manchester Airport will necessitate improved rail access between the two sites, and the development of direct rail services. The development of the Manchester Hub rail concept, Airport Western Link and capacity improvements at Manchester Piccadilly Station will be necessary to achieve this.
- 7.14 As part of a demand management strategy, high quality public transport links between all the main airports should be provided, including express coach links to the main urban centres where rail links do not exist.
- 7.15 The statement that the environmental case for air-to-rail substitution is "only marginal" is not supported. High speed rail links to key international airports are crucial to reducing journey times between the North West and major airports. The upgrading of the West Coast Main Line, together with the SRA's proposed high speed line have a critical role. All the Merseyside authorities are in full support of a west coast aligned high speed rail line between London and Scotland. Air-to-rail substitution would also release much needed capacity at South East airports.
- 7.16 It is suggested that surface access improvements should be developed in advance of new airport facilities.

8. Financial and Staffing Implications

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9. Equal Opportunity Implications

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Human Rights Implications

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report.

11. Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Increased air travel will entail an increased chance of accidents, but adequate safety and mitigation measures will mean the risk is within acceptable limits.

12. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 12.1 Increased air traffic will have significant environmental and sustainability implications in terms of noise, pollution and surface access congestion. It is therefore essential that these issues are addressed and mitigation measures put in place before the necessary infrastructure improvements are developed.

13. Ward Member Implications

- 13.1 This report will be of interest to all Members, but particularly to those Members representing wards which are under flightpaths from LJLA i.e. Eastham, Bromborough, Clatterbridge, Bebington, Prenton, Royden and Moreton.

14. Recommendations

- 14.1 That this report be noted.
- 14.2 That the Select Committees recommend to Cabinet that comments outlined in section 7 of this report form the basis for the Council's response to the Department for Transport's consultation.

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