

Panel Question 5D: Airports

(i) Does Policy RT3 provide a sustainable strategic context for the development of and surface access to the Region's airports, and is it consistent with other policies in the draft RSS and national policy context including the Air Transport White Paper 2003?

1.1 Development of aviation policy at the regional level presents a number of challenges not least the apparent conflict between the desire to let airports grow to contribute towards the economy and the environmental impact this is likely to have. Whilst the Assembly recognises the concerns raised by a number of respondents with regards to the environmental impacts of aviation (particularly with regards to climate change) it is clear that the government is committed to growing aviation at all three regional airports and, in particular, developing Manchester Airport as a hub for the North of England and parts of Wales and the Midlands.

1.2 Planning Policy Statement 11 (PPS11) Annex B provides a clear steer as to the expected content of the policy. Paragraph 24 states that "the RSS will need to be consistent with the conclusions of the white paper". In addition, it goes on to state that, in association with the Highways Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority (now DfT Rail), the Regional Planning Body (RPB) will need to consider ground transport issues including those pertaining to both freight and the future development of airports. This paragraph also states that RPBs should work with Air Transport Fora at airports to work towards maximising the number of trips made by public transport.

1.3 The Guide to Producing Regional Transport Strategies provides further detail on the development of aviation policies. It reiterates the statement in PPS11 concerning the Air Services White Paper being the basis for the development of regional aviation policy and states that the RSS should "address the regional and sub-regional considerations for delivery of these key policies - in particular, surface access requirements". In addition, the guidance states that, where appropriate, proposals for surface access improvement should be listed in the regional transport investment priorities. The guidance goes on to give examples of what the policy could include:

- major new public transport infrastructure or services which link to other major national public transport networks;
- road development on the strategic road network which substantially improves access;
- developments that considerably improve access in a particular sub-region (to be part of the sub-regional strategy);
- airport traffic management measures;
- co-ordinated region-wide marketing and through ticketing initiatives.

1.4 Furthermore, whilst the Air Services White Paper recognises the impact that aviation has on the environment (particularly with regards to aircraft emissions), it is clear from the document that emissions from aviation could be allowed to rise within a decreasing total:

"The Government is committed to a comprehensive approach, using economic instruments to ensure that growing industries are catered for within a reducing total."¹

1.5 Consequently, the RSS/RTS has concentrated on the areas in which it can provide guidance in line with central Government policy. This has meant that the

¹ Paragraph 3.37 Air Services White Paper. Department for Transport, 2003

policy focuses on land-side transport issues such as the modal choices of passengers and staff and issues regarding land-use. The movement of freight on to and off airport sites was raised by a number of respondents². In particular many noted that air-freight (and especially belly-hold freight) was not referred to in the policy (which a number of respondents thought was a somewhat glaring omission). This is acknowledged by the Assembly and officers suggest additional policy wording and supporting text to RT6 – A Regional Framework for the Management of Freight Transport.

1.6 In terms of airport growth, it is the view of the Assembly that the policy does provide a strategic context for growth as it has been structured to deliver the objectives outlined in the Air Services White Paper through supporting the continued development of the three operational airports in the North West and ensuring that the potential for developing a fourth at Carlisle is not jeopardised. This stance supports a number of other policies in the draft RSS including RT5 ((Freight), MCR1 (Manchester City Region), LCR1 (Liverpool City Region), CLCR1 (Central Lancashire City Region)

1.7 Nonetheless, the continued growth in aviation is not without its consequences. In particular, increasing the number of flights from any given airport will place additional pressures on land and will lead to an increase in emissions (notwithstanding savings made through the use of cleaner, more fuel efficient and/or larger aircraft) and, potentially, changes to noise levels in the vicinity of airports. This potentially conflicts with Policy DP1 (Tackle Climate Change) and the Regional Sustainable Development Framework.

1.8 Following representations from stakeholders³ during the consultation process Assembly officers suggest a number of changes to the policy and supporting text⁴. In particular, a new second clause is suggested for the policy stating that airport operators should seek to significantly increase the proportion of staff and passengers using public transport to reach the airport and to reduce noise and atmospheric pollution generated by surface activities. This should address a large number of the objections raised in a manner which is consistent with the Air Services White Paper. Furthermore, this policy can be delivered at a regional level whereas a number of the issues raised during the consultation could only be dealt with at a national or international level and are, therefore, outwith the remit of the RSS. Clause 4 could also be strengthened to identify it as being a sequential approach to airport development and the clause relating to general aviation could be strengthened, again, in response to comments received.

1.9 The Assembly would welcome a clear statement from GONW at the EIP regarding how Draft RSS could be reworded to meet the concerns expressed in their submission.

² Including: Manchester Airport; Cheshire County Council; Liverpool City Council; Peel Holdings; Wirral Borough Council

³ Including: AGMA; Environment Agency; General Aviation Awareness Council; Manchester Airport; Cheshire County Council; Liverpool City Council; Peel Holdings; Wirral Borough Council;

⁴ Briefing Paper 20 - Suggested Wording Changes to Draft RSS, NWRA, September 2006