

EPT- 16- 02 (p 3)

ENVIRONMENT, PLANNING AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Date: Wednesday 20 November 2002

Time: 9.00am to 12 pm

Venue: Committee Room 3/4, National Assembly Building

THE FUTURE OF AIR TRANSPORT: CONSULTATION

Purpose

1.1 To seek the Committee's views as part of the consultation on the future of air transport in Wales. Members of the Economic Development Committee have been invited to attend.

Presentation

Chris Cain, Airports Policy Division, UK Department for Transport (DfT) will present the key options in the document.

Summary

1. On 23 July 2002, the UK Government published a series of regional consultation documents and supporting technical documentation on the future of air transport in the United Kingdom. The publication of these documents marked the start of a consultation period to inform a White Paper on Air Transport, which the UK Government will publish next year.
2. Aviation development in Wales is of key importance to economic development and the implementation of an integrated transport policy. The Welsh Assembly Government has worked closely with the Department for Transport (DfT) on the production of the Wales Air Services Consultation Document to ensure Welsh interests are fully reflected. The WDA, local authorities and business interests have contributed to its preparation. During the consultation period, the Assembly

has facilitated stakeholder topic and strategy meetings, in North and South Wales, to examine and discuss the issues. All Assembly members received a copy. It can also be accessed on <http://www.aviation.dft.gov.uk/consult/airconsult/index.htm>

Timing

1. The consultation ends on 30 November 2002. Responses will be analysed by DfT over a three-month period and the Assembly Government will be associated with that process.

National Context

1. There has been a sixfold increase in air travel since 1970, and demand is expected to continue to grow. In 1970, some 32 million passengers passed through UK airports. Today that figure is 180 million passengers through a combination of business and leisure travel. One third of all UK goods exported go by air. Business depends on its ability to get goods quickly to markets across the world.
2. The documents reflect six "National Policy Scenarios" for possible developments of air transport or constraints which are subject to consultation and the UK Government will take account of responses in preparing their White Paper.

Context for a Strategy for Wales

5.1 - The future development of airport capacity in the South East of

England will have important implications for Wales;

- Demand for air travel is strongest from people and businesses located in an around London and from people wishing to fly to London. In 2000 the South East accounted for 53% of air travellers but only 35% of the population. There is evidence of capacity shortfall and demand for air transport in London is much higher than that any part of the country. The UK Government believes that more use should be made of regional airports so that they can meet as much as possible of the local demand while recognising that development of London airports will affect every part of the country and air travel to the rest of the world;

- A number of options have been put forward including new runways at Heathrow and Stansted and a new airport at Cliffe Marshes in North Kent.

A Strategy for Wales

1. - Maintain and expand the existing range of core domestic and short haul European services at Cardiff;
 - Support development of route networks at airports outside Wales serving Welsh traffic especially Manchester for North Wales and Birmingham for Mid Wales. London airports are especially important for South Wales and also Bristol;
 - Develop Cardiff as a domestic hub within Wales. Public investment (which would require DfT and EC approval) would be necessary to support intra-Wales services such as North-West to Cardiff;
 - Encourage the development of new services and higher frequency to all key hubs on the Continent from Cardiff and a mid and long term development of direct scheduled flights to a US East Coast hub and Toronto;
 - Improve the already strong Charter network from Cardiff;
 - Promote expansion of Cardiff by enabling development of infrastructure capacity and ensure smaller Welsh airports (Swansea is the only other airport with scheduled flights currently) have the necessary operational infrastructure;
 - Support expansion of aircraft maintenance operations and associated aerospace activities at Cardiff and St Athan (a study led by WDA with business, local authority and Assembly Government involvement is looking at the economic potential generally and is in the final stages);
 - Improve surface access to Cardiff (a study commissioned by the Assembly Government and local authorities is in its final stages and the re-opening of the Vale of Glamorgan railway line with a bus link should be achieved by May 2004);
 - Improve rail links to Heathrow and Manchester airports.
 - Any significant growth in air transport or developments at individual airports have an impact on the environment and this has to be balanced against other benefits. The report indicates that under all scenarios for growth up to 2030 Cardiff

International Airport would meet noise and air quality standards and would be unlikely to affect environmental designations.

- The DfT's analysis indicates that a new Severnside airport would only be viable if Cardiff or Bristol or both were to close or become congested to the point of capacity which is unlikely to occur in the forecasting period. The developers, however, envisage a major airport on the lines of Gatwick being built. A proposal to locate an airport at Llanwern was made known after the completion of the study. Both are speculative and very long term proposals and possibly 15 years away and are not receiving support from the Assembly Government. In the case of Llanwern the Assembly Government is already actively supporting both directly and through the new Newport URC the massive development of the disused part of the Llanwern site to create top quality jobs for South Wales. Both developers have been advised to submit the analysis underlying their proposals as part of the consultation exercise.

Compliance

There are no funding implications arising directly from the consultation exercise.

Contact Point

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