

Rob Gibson
Head of environmental Strategy, Hounslow Council

Our next speaker is Rob Gibson who's head of environmental strategy in the Borough of Hounslow. He's been working in pollution control for 15 years and he's been involved with the aviation sector for sometime particularly I think in the delights of the Terminal 5 enquiry and now leads on environmental issues on behalf of the borough. He's Chair of the West London Alliance Air Quality Working Group and Honorary Secretary of the South East Division of the National Society for Clean Air and Environmental Protection. Rob's going to talk to us about some of the local air quality issues.

Rob Gibson: A quick look at the Society. If anyone wants to join see me afterwards. As I say it's my name on the slide here but really what I am is the under spokesman for the four local authorities which surround Heathrow and I have to start by saying all the work we do on air quality is joint work and I have to start by thanking Monica Wills, Tracey Wilmot-French and Val who's in the audience here today but for basically making it a bit more tolerable going through this work.

To start with what we'll look at as I go through the presentation (slide 1). Basically previous speakers spoke about what's up here and we're very much about what's down there in relation to air quality so we look at rules, what's happening at Heathrow and I'll show some of the modeling that's been done for air quality and discuss the mechanisms for addressing the problem.

So why are we here (slide 2 & 3)? This is the framework of rules that local authorities are looking at amongst others is the EU framework directive & daughter directives. Strategy and the Environment Act that is specifically aimed at local authorities. But that's why I'm here it's because of Lyon (slide 4). Now Lyon, this chap, he appeared in a BTR document and the transport white paper and basically what this advert is saying is Lyon's lungs were better if the air's clean. Lyon drives us forward.

So we start with the European directive. There's a framework directive and two daughter directives (slide 5) and they look at a number of pollutants including NOX and PMs, which is the most interesting to us. The directives that limit values and these are absolute values that must be achieved by 2010 and the Secretary of State for the Environment has taken responsibility for achieving these limits.

I didn't really want to mention the third one. This is the only bit of modeling that I've got that looks 2010 and you can see the situation that exists in Heathrow which is the inner ring and then the outer ring which is Hounslow out here and Hillingdon's up there – are alleged to have been exposed to an unacceptable level if the third runway goes ahead (slide 6).

We're moving on to the Mayor's air quality policies (slide 7). There are three main ones and they're given here. I would have brought a copy to show you but it's too heavy on the tube and within the Mayor's air quality strategy is this diagram, which I think is probably the best summary of what's happening in London (slide 8). This again is for NO₂. It looks forward to 2005 and there's the central London and there's Heathrow, which exhibits the problem again.

The Review and Assessment of Air Quality. This is what local authorities get up to (slide 9). We've been working on it fairly constantly since probably 2000. We do what we do the best, which is looking at something and doing the monitoring and doing an assessment. So we look at the concentrations existing and future and then we designate air quality management areas if we think that the levels, in this case NO₂, are not going to be achieved by 2005. So that's the modeling that we've done and again it shows that very big black spot in the middle of where Heathrow is – it's red in this case (slide 10).

So taking that forward we've all declared air quality management areas (slide 11) – Hillingdon's M40 downwards, Hounslow is two specific ones although that's likely to be changed in the future, Slough – it's an old map and the borough boundary's changed but Slough hasn't declared an air quality management area simply because there's no people in that bit of Slough so the UK rules and regulations not only look at air quality concentrations but whether there's folks there to be exposed. The EU regulations are different.

So struggling on. We've declared our areas then, we go back and look into the whole process again and we have to try and find where the pollution comes from, euphemistically known as source apportionment (slide 12). So we look at road vehicles, rail and the buses. Clearly there's an aviation component and we look at other industries, we look at staff, we look at aviation staff coming in and out of the airport, we're looking at our own staff coming in and out of the Civic Centre and there's issues with air side vehicles as well.

So once we've determined where the pollution is coming from we have to determine who's responsible so we can go and knock on their door and say can you do something about this (slide 13). Heathrow Airport obviously is an emitter. Within that the aviation industry is an emitter of NO₂, Highways Agency has responsibility for the road, Transportation for London in London has some responsibility for the roads, outside is the county so Surrey County Council, etc and of course the local authorities where we have responsibility we regulate some of the lesser polluting processes and we have our own roads to look after. So once we've done all this we get to the tricky bit, which is taking action (slide 4), and as I said before local authorities are very, very good at monitoring and waving bits of diffusion tubes and struggling on with calibration gases. When it actually comes to setting a pen to a piece of paper it becomes very difficult for us. The context of our action is this and this is probably just a set of examples really.

We're talking about aviation policy, well, obviously everything we do is in the background – there's the CRS studies, there's transport policy, transport white paper, the demand for travel so it's ever increasing and of course we're all of us of the local planning authorities as well so we have an input into that side of things.

That the climate change is a kind of different one - we've heard an awful lot about that and a lot of emphasis has been put on that and I think that's correct. The most recent set of guidance, which local authorities work to in relation to local air quality specifically mentions climate change which is a departure from what's happened in the past. We have to address the trade-offs along with you guys as well so it's not ignored by any stretch of the imagination (slide 15).

We have to identify the stakeholders (slide 16) so it's BAA, airlines, UK economy, transport operators, bus companies, the government, the European Union, Greater London Authority, local authorities and we also have to talk about the community which is the folks that live and breathe the air in our areas. We've heard about this, this morning, about the trade-offs between noise and climate change. We are the only voice of the community and we have to stick up for them in a way.

So once we've established who, what, where and when we try and get together with these people – BAA Local Authorities Working Group – that really kicked off immediately after Terminal 5. There's the BAA Emissions Group. I'm not going to say a word about the BAA Emissions Group because Kevin is coming after me and he's going to talk all about that (slide 17). There's the Heathrow Area Transport Forum and it's air quality sub group, which is a relatively new thing. It's chaired by Val from Hillingdon. There's the West London Air Quality Working Group chaired by me and there's a joint working group between West London and the transport guys in each local authority trying to take some joint action. We've raised some money looking at air quality and transport issues right across the whole of West London.

Moving on to possible actions. Reducing parking spaces has been talked about this morning. Mr. Gummer nicked my bit on that so good on him! We look at traffic restraint, congestion charging, traffic reduction, road pricing and the introduction of low emission zones, low emission zones being banning certain vehicles from certain areas (slide 18). There's a study being done in London and that's about to report. Congestion charging's looking very promising although it's unpopular in some circles. And we can look for action to the industry (slide 19) and it's a matter of who's going to pay for the transport improvement and I think it's not just the industry that may have to pay. We spoke earlier about Cross Rail. There's possibly a government responsibility as well. I don't want to mention that because I've mentioned it once already. The possibility of looking at the Zurich system whereby more polluting aircraft are charged more for landing at Heathrow. Possible actions from the airlines (slide 20) and this is what we discussed with Kevin. Introduction of technical improvements, modernisation, change in operating practices and Kevin will say more about that. Government – we've got something (slide 21). We've got a movement limit at Heathrow based on noise and air quality as part of the T5 decision. It's actually set at 480,000 and current operations are 460 but we're above the limits currently so it's not really set in relation to any sort of sustainable grounds vis a vis local air quality. We've talked about passenger limits in the past. The more I think about it the more I think that's not appropriate at all because it's virtually unenforceable. What I would like to see in relation to government actions, if it's legal, is some sort of tax break for the airlines and others to get the fleet cleaner quicker so improve the engines and what have you and bring in the technology sooner similar to the way that they're looking at liquid petroleum gas and there's a huge tax break on that for the private motorcar.

Look at the planning system. Unitary development plans – they're not going to be called that soon (slide 22). I can't remember what it is they're going to be called. You have to look at the London Plan which is the framework planning structure for London Plan doesn't include any reference to Terminal 5 at all and the borough planner at Hounslow made a reference to it being held below the water before we start with it at the recent examination in public. Parking – been mentioned before. Development control on site. Control adjacent developments. I was talking to Kevin yesterday about PPG24 and noise. Control major expansion and mitigate.

So where do we go from here (slide 23)? We have to continue to work together and work up the options. As I say local authorities are in the process of developing action plans and we do need to put something concrete in. Money is available for it to use awareness and that's really why I'm here today.

I'll start with some conclusions (slides 24 & 25). The air quality at Heathrow is poor and I don't really want to get into argument about how poor it is. Every bit of work that we've done has shown it's poor on grounds of NO₂. There's other work that has been done. All the T5 work showed it's poor so I think we've established that beyond reason.

It's unrealistic of local authorities to expect Heathrow to contract in response to this and putting another hat on Heathrow employees directly 11,500 Hounslow residents so we've got to bear that in mind at all times. What we are interested in is mitigation and future mitigation must be commensurate with environmental damage so we can't just continue to expand without any mitigation.

We all must contribute to the future mitigation and as I say pick up the environmental cost. And we can't duck the issue. It's easy to give up but we can't do that so final message, in action planning, getting the problems sorted out – the partnerships, the dialogue with BAA. BAA are very, very important and if any more of the stakeholders here want to get in touch with us that's fine and we're happy to engage.

I end with where we were four or five years ago is local authorities on one side and BAA and BA on the other staring across a board at a swimming pool in the Ramada Hotel. And I know it's changed its name but to me it will always be the Ramada Hotel.

Recently we've actually gone from that stage of throwing bricks at each other to actually jointly funding a website and it's from little acorns grow big trees but what we're going to have is a jointly funded website which allow anybody who's interested, anybody who's got a stake in the air quality around the Heathrow area to click onto this website and actually find out about what the air quality's actually doing and hopefully find out what we're doing about it and what we're doing about it together. And on that note, Hugh, I'll finish. Thanks.

Chairman: Thank you, Rob, for illustrating clearly an area which may not be familiar to a lot of people in the audience but it's certainly emerged as possibly the top issue in respect to getting more capacity in terms of runways in the South East of England and one that the industry has to address.