

Tim Johnson
Director, Aviation Environment Federation

Chairman: Now we go onto time Johnson, who is chief executive of the Aviation Environment Federation where he's been since about 1989. Tim has done a terrific job in raising the profile of the NGOs within the aviation community and in particular in campaigning for and then succeeding in getting observer status for the NGOs at the IKOs Cape meetings and indeed in representing the NGO community at these meetings. Tim.

Tim Johnson: Thank you, Hugh (slide 1). If you believe John Gummer this morning when he addressed you then the role of Roger and myself over the next hour is probably to make you miserable. I hope it's more than that. I think the role of the NGOs is not just about highlighting problems however legitimate an aim that is. It's also about trying to develop solutions and as Hugh has said I think it's particularly within the aviation debate. The NGOs have become quite a central part of that debate over the last three or four years. We now have places at NATS, stakeholder council, we go to ATK meetings, we go to ICAO, particularly as part of working group sessions and we're involved in several sorts of industry partnerships. So I think it's very much about communicating a message from the grass roots about what airport residents actually feel, how they perceive the issues but as I say also in developing solutions to that.

Just by way of introduction I think I'd better say something about who the NGOs are. As Hugh said about two or three years ago we were successful in gaining observer status to IKO's Cape committee and to do that we actually had to come together with some of our US colleagues and we formed the International Coalition for Sustainable Aviation (slide 2). Like the airlines, like the airports, they are both represented at that body as observers in an association role and therefore it was imperative that the environmental community came together and actually did so on an equal basis so we formed ICSA. Most of the NGOs on there are campaigning bodies like AEF, like Friends of the Earth but they're also technical experts as well and especially on some of the solutions where they can actually borrow from examples outside of the aviation sector particularly within the UNFCCC process. There is a lot of expertise that they bring to that.

If that's what happens at an international level then certainly the NGOs are also very active on a regional level. Again, we go to the European Commission's aviation stakeholder meetings. You'll find the groups there that are active in particular the European Federation for Transport and Environment, Friends of the Earth Europe. Friends of the Earth actually ran a very good campaign for three years in the late 1990s called The Right Price for Air Travel Campaign and more recently the formation of Green Skies. Green Skies is less about national NGOs; it's actually about community groups around Europe's airports, that's how it was set up. So it's people coming together, sharing information, sharing experiences and trying to develop a common position.

Within the UK at the moment you have a similar grouping of organisations and it goes by the name of Airport Watch. I think Airport Watch was launched in about July of last year in reaction to the government's proposals for widespread export expansion and meeting growth. We thought there were some key environmental messages that needed to be heard. The likes of Transport 2000, Friends of the Earth, AEF came together under that banner.

And then right at the bottom of this slide but by no means least, you have the local community groups themselves. Many of them are actually the effected population, the ones who actually suffer from noise and if you like they're our constituency interests. Whether we're speaking to the EU or ICAO we will do so on their behalf.

In my starting point today is really to look at the whole issue of growth (slide 3). This for me is the problem that underpins climate change, noise issues and air quality. It's the forecast growth in traffic. Obviously we have various estimates and the one I put here is 4%-5% per annum for increases in passengers. Again I agree with the previous speakers, although we have various problems facing the industry at the moment, I certainly believe they are of a short term nature and given the government is looking ahead 30 years, I think we can actually take this as being a figure that is more or less correct over that period.

Perhaps more importantly for climate change is actually the increase in ton km performed. That's actually about 8%. It has been 8% through most of the 1990s with the exception of about one or two years. Given the fact that it's not just an increase in passengers but it's passengers flying further, when that comes to emissions that is the key figure. Set against that I've actually put in – call it EG, it's short for Efficiency Gain. If you look at the ICAO forecast, they believe that efficiency will improve in the business as usual case at about 1% per annum, that's through natural fleet replacement by and large. Various reports over the last four or five years, some of them commissioned by government, to see how much further we can go beyond that have indicated that perhaps with some regulatory incentive or some financial incentive we could actually achieve in the region of about 2% per annum. But quite clearly there's a big gap between the 8% growth per annum in ton km performed and the 2% efficiency gain. In other words that shortfall between the two is the growing cumulative impact that this industry has on the environment and that I think is the key thing that we need to try and address.

ACARE (slide 4). You had a presentation on it yesterday. I actually find this really refreshing. I know going to some of the other industry forums in the past there's a tendency for the industry not to make optimistic predictions about what it wants to try and achieve in the future. Primarily I think because there's a wariness that what you actually as a target sometimes becomes the basis for a standard and because of that those actual figures aren't usually put in a table so I find it quite refreshing and fully support the goals of ACARE that have been set out.

But I think that we have to consider if during that timescale between now and 2020 aviation is more or less going to double. So even a halving of CO₂ emissions is more or less the minimum you're going to have to achieve in environmental terms even if you want to try and stabilise the effects. So if you go back to the previous slide, if we can't get that technology figure much higher then obviously we have to make that shortfall in other ways and for us I think the key message that the NGO's are putting across at the moment is the role of modal substitution for short haul, it is cost internalisation for the environmental effects and it is looking at the whole issue of greater regulation.

I'm not actually going to look in much detail at the issue of climate change partly because Roger's going to deal with that in his presentation and also I feel we were actually very supportive in all ways of the recommendations from the RCEP report and given the fact that Roland Clift spoke to you yesterday about that I have very little more to add to it other than to say that the menu of options that he set out is we believe the correct way forward to go.

You had some comments this morning about the role of emissions trading and this is the only thing I'm going to dwell on before I move on to other issues that relate to climate (slide 5). Because it's gaining more and more momentum both at a European level and at ICAO level, the NGOs sat around and after a while came up with what they thought was their take-on list, their position and in fact this is our current position. Keith I think alluded to the fact that the NGOs are supportive of trading. That's probably an overstatement. We are supportive but it's conditional support at this stage. We still believe that the short-term measure is the introduction of emissions charges. We say that because we think they can be introduced quickly, we believe that a credible emissions trading system is going to take some while to develop. But what we've said is if you put charges on aviation now, we are prepared to support an emissions trading scheme in the medium term and we've probably identified about 2012, the second budget period, as the timescale for that. Providing it's done on a credible basis and it's actually demonstrated to us that it is more environmentally effective than the charges then they might ultimately replace.

So here are just three or four key headings of which I think will give rise to a credible emissions trading system. The first one is a stringent cap. I think this one is perhaps one of the most key features. At the end of the day aviation will be hoping to trade on an open market with other sectors and other emissions reductions largely that have been met under the Kyoto reductions. So I think when it comes to setting a target or a cap for aviation a similar level of stringency needs to be thought about.

The other key one of course is the radiative forcing element. I don't actually think that a trading scheme that looks at radiative forcing is crucial providing that the environmental policy that underpins it deals with all greenhouse gases. In other words it maybe that a CO₂ trading scheme is acceptable if you have other measures in place to deal with NOX and vapour. Alternatively you could if the Royal Commission suggested, incorporate those gases into a trading scheme as well. The radiative forcing element cannot be ignored.

We would also say that we would like to see some form of auctioning. This is partly based on our arguments that aviation needs to meet its external costs and just because you have a cap doesn't mean that there are not external costs beyond that. An example of that would be again the current Kyoto limit. You have a UK policy that says really to achieve stabilisation we need a 16% reduction and yet you've got a Kyoto commitment at the moment of 5%. That still means there is an external cost of CO₂ that lies between that point of Kyoto and the ultimate 16% so we think that some form of auctioning would actually capture that.

And the last one I think to be truly effective you've got to have wide coverage. You can't allow room for leakage and actually erode all the benefits the trading scheme may have.

The other issue I think that comes up under the trading heading is if you find a solution for climate change implicit in that is the fact that aviation will grow and probably grow quite substantially. You still have to deal with the local impacts and part of a sustainable aviation policy means treating the local and the global effects together. This slightly expands the list from the ones you've had before. It's not just about noise and air quality. One of the big issues that our members come to us with is third party safety. It's fears about an airport crash. And those are things and Carl said yesterday, perhaps do explain or help to explain some of their reaction to noise but again you can't separate them out. Water issues, bio diversity, heritage conservation issues are neither in the media at the moment partly as a reflection on the debate about whether or not to build an airport at Cliff (slide 6).

And I think there's also more of an emergence now of crosscutting issues. What are the health impacts of noise as opposed to purely its annoyance effects? And of course urbanisation pressures (slide 7). You can't separate the airport system from the infrastructure and the housing that you need to support it.

So I think all of these need to be included as part of a sustainable available policy. Because again you've had presentations this morning on air quality, I want to pick on just one of those as the theme for the rest of my presentation and that is look at noise.

I would agree with all the previous speakers that in terms of unit noise there has been tremendous reductions but that is not the perception on the ground. The perception that we get from our members is that noise is just as much an issue today as it was 20-25 years ago. AEF was founded in 1975, we were founded largely on noise grounds and I certainly in my time here and it's coming on for about 14 years now – I have actually seen perhaps an increase in the concerns about noise particularly over the last five or six years.

I think the reason for that is while aircraft have become quieter or perhaps I should just say less noisy, people on the ground still find the event at a level where they are disturbing and during that period they have had more noise events and it's one of these questions that's very difficult to answer. Would you rather have 100 very noisy movements a day or 200 less noisy ones? If you find it annoying in both categories, less noisy aircraft aren't necessarily the only solution and therefore I think this is one of the reasons that underpins this quite strong public perception that there is still a noise problem around many of the UK's airports. In particular night noise. I'm not sure that complaint will ever go away. It's not about the quote account system it's really about night flights, having them or not having them but that is a serious issue for most of our members.

Again, coming back to the emergence of cross-cutting issues like health, I think you'll find again there's a growing focus that noise isn't just about annoyance it's about a whole range of things. It's about performance at work, it's about performance at school and again a lot more attention is being played by academics now on the role that aircraft noise has on child performance.

I think perhaps the most fundamental perception that needs to be addressed by the aviation community and by regulators is that current legislation is actually failing them and doesn't actually address their needs. As a result I think you'll see greater opposition to development proposals. I certainly think you've seen that over at Terminal 5 and with Manchester's second runway and I think you also will have noticed that the local organisations again are increasingly better organised, better funded, more willing to seek legal solutions. It's not just about the night flight's case, which the Heathrow residents took to the European Court of Human Rights. There is lots of willingness amongst local groups to try and get funding to seek judicial decisions whether they be at local level, regional or national level. I think the result is it is uncertain for everyone. People only spend that money and go down that route out of a sense of frustration and that perhaps there's a better way to go about things.

So I've actually grouped their concerns on noise into three areas. The first is the need to have effective measures in place to deal with the problem. The second one is to actually improve on the reporting of the problem and the third one is to create sort of long term certainty.

If we take the first one which is the need for effective measures to tackle aircraft noise. I think perhaps this time six years ago there was actually a sense of expectation that this was a problem that we were beginning to get on top of. We had the Chapter 2 phase out. A lot of the very noisy aircraft in operation at the time were even going or planned to go within the next few years. We had a discussion at international level in the lead up to the ICAO meeting in 2001 on what was the future level of stringency for Chapter 4 and also the extent to which Chapter 3 aircraft should be phased out on the basis of the Chapter 2 ones. I think underpinning that there was also a wide recognition of the problem. If you look at the IKO figures that were produced to underpin their discussions in 2001 on the need for a new stringency standard, the forecast which showed no new action, in other words do nothing, pointed to the fact that aircraft noise in Europe would expose a further 42% of people compared to the situation then to aircraft noise levels. That's despite the Chapter 2 phase out.

Anyway, with these discussions in place they were largely optimistic and I think it created a sense of expectation which when Chapter 4 actually came out and we had the standard of -10 decibels as a cumulative margin starting in 2006, that brought widespread disappointment compounded by the fact that ICAO had nothing to say at all about a further round of phase outs.

I think it is perhaps worth pausing at this point and just returning to one of the themes from yesterday on climate change about the extent to which European and US takes on this differently and I think ICAO and the decision in 2001 fully reflect that debate. If you look at the positions going into the meetings you found that Europe was very supportive of a stringency standard that went beyond -10 . The airport community wanted a standard of -14 , the NGO community wanted stringent standards and a phase out and it was largely met by a countering view from North America that Chapter 2 phase out had provided huge benefits to their local communities and why burden the industry any further with a Chapter 3 phase out at that time or a very stringent new standard. And hence ICAO is very much about compromise not about necessarily driving forward the tough standards that are needed to actually deliver real environmental performance and I think to actually give some sort of quantitative evidence of that if I go back to the 42% increase in noise that ICAO was predicting then the increase or the decrease rather from the introduction of a -10 cumulative margin was actually very small (slide 11).

These are the figures out of the CERAS report and the RASCA report produced by government (slide 13). The top figures in 2030 are deliberately large. They include the impacts on local communities if you provide additional infrastructure. So for example the figure for Heathrow is a figure for Heathrow with a third runway, the figure for Stanstead is a figure for Stanstead with two additional runways. Actually the figure Gatwick, although there is a larger figure for two runways that one there is actually for one runway. I don't actually want to get into the order of magnitude of these increases, all I want is to use this to illustrate the fact that technology alone isn't going to solve the noise problems if the industry wants to actually move forward and get the growth that it desires. These are the impacts that we face.

Perhaps I needn't worry too much about the introduction of quieter aircraft through Chapter 4 because we have ICAO's balanced approach. Having said that I do have a slight concern about it. As you know it has four elements; reduction at source, reduction through land use planning, operational procedures and operational restrictions. Obviously we've heard from the ICAO standpoint that you're not going to get huge reductions through a reduction at source in terms of a Chapter 4 standard. Most aircraft are achieving far more than that that are already on the production line but there's no additional incentive to go beyond what they're already doing, they're certainly not driven by standards (slide 14).

I would also suggest and this is perhaps in contrast to what Carl was saying yesterday that land use planning and operational procedures in Europe have largely been exhausted and that's not to undermine the efforts of things like CBA but the thing is they are already being applied. So we're looking for what additionally can these measures bring. Well the only thing you have left to control the noise impact under the balanced approach is perhaps operational restrictions (slide 15). I don't have a problem with that. What I do have a problem with is that all of this is supposed to apply on an airport-by-airport basis. You might say there are good reasons for that; it actually stops unnecessary action being taken at airports where there is no noise problem and therefore unnecessary costs. But equally I think that works in reverse. I actually think unless you do things on a blanket level and keep everyone at the same level there are reasons why airports will not take action because of the competitive disadvantages they will incur compared to perhaps a competing airport nearby that isn't subject to the same restrictions (slide 16). So I actually see this as a barrier to implementation and therefore one that may inhibit effective action and I think this really comes home with the recent row between the US and the EU over Hushkit and at the end of the day the Hushkit regulation, which applied at all European airports, was withdrawn. They replaced it with a new directive. A 5-decibel cumulative margin means more or less the same thing so it wasn't the environmental component that was at stake it now under the balanced approach the new directive applies on an airport-by-airport basis. I actually find the guidance being developed by government on how it's going to implement this directive very vague on saying when airports should actually undertake an assessment to see whether they have a noise problem and when they should actually come forward with their proposals to phase out aircraft within this 5db margin. I just don't think it will happen. Maybe I'm too pessimistic but I think with perhaps one or two examples the risk of losing competition to a rival airport will actually stand in the way.

I want to remove on to perhaps the reporting stage. I'm going to come back to an alternative method on what to do about noise in a moment. The second area of course is trying to get some improvement in reporting the noise climate (slide 17). Again, at the moment in the UK we use LEQ, most countries around the world use some form of LEQ with or without weightings, different time periods. I think the reason why so many local groups get frustrated is there are large numbers of complaints from outside the 57-LEQ contour, the contour the government regards as really being the threshold of disturbance (slide 18). So they know they're annoyed and yet official statistics tell them that they're not. The other reasons they cite as a criticism of LEQ, obviously not sensitive to large changes in numbers of noise events. And again the consuls you get aren't typical of a day. If you've ever seen an airport noise contour it's based on a 90-day average so you'll actually find that you'll probably have 75% movements in one direction 25% on the other because that was the average split over the period. It doesn't actually bear any resemblance to either a worse case scenario or to a typical operating day.

Sure, the government's commissioned a new study into this. It's going to take three years. It started last year so we still have some way to go. They are actually going to test some of these concerns and actually see if they can reach some conclusion about whether the current noise to distance relationship for LEQ isn't accurate and whether LEQ really does reflect community concerns. But in the meantime the community groups have actually identified a more informative way of presenting the information. Some of you will be aware of the saga of the third runway in the airport. Long legal battles, became highly political and at the end of it when the third runway actually opened there was a lot of complaints from the community that the information they had been presented with at the time of the inquiries and the hearings didn't actually reflect the reality once it was operational. So the Australian Department of Transport actually set about saying is there a better way that we can supplement noise contours with further data (slide 19). And I stress supplement. In some ways contours are a useful tool, they're certainly good for comparisons. If you're looking at how different options may effect an airport you can certainly see the changes comparing like with like. But in terms of actually conveying information to people they thought there's perhaps time for change and what they came up with was a new noise map (slide 20). Effectively it's a noise map which shows departure and arrival paths and the sways either side of that which the aircraft actually fly and at any point under that you can be presented with information about the average aircraft altitude at that particular point in time, the number or daily movements, the average daily movements on that flight path and the range so that you know how many on the quietest day and how many on the noisiest day. Also the number of days in which there are no flights at all so that you can actually make a valued judgment about the acceptability or otherwise of those events.

And going back to this noise and number issue about the number of aircraft events being a key factor, the number of events over a given threshold. So if you actually say that the threshold for disturbance in terms of heat noise is 70 decibels then on this basis it gives you the number of events above that. Now unfortunately people that read only PDS it's not easy to pinch their slides so on that basis I haven't got a very good copy but take it from me this is the information I've just outlined. These are the average daily movements; these are the daily range either side and these are on the actual track. You can see they don't use LEQ, they use an LEQ derivative called ANEF – this is their noise contour and this is the information provided outside of the contour for residents. And quite clearly for some of these people - I mean if you're in location B, 39 movements a day, quite regular over flights – this is valuable information that at least makes them feel that their problem has been identified and it's a much more reliable source perhaps for planning some of the mitigation measures. So I think on that basis this is something we would like to see more widely adopted in the UK and it certainly has the support of most of our member groups.

I'm very quickly going to go onto the last item and then onto the conclusions – the need to create long term certainty. One of the things we feel airports need to do is perhaps develop a noise capacity approach (slide 22). It's an idea that we've tried to promote over the last 10 years or so. We continually revisit it, we elaborate on what's required but I think the fundamental message is that you actually create long-term certainty by setting a noise cap for an airport. Not individual departure levels but total noise exposure measured over an annual period. It's already in existence in Skipol, London City Airport has a similar approach and I would have to say, whether this is the reason for it or not, London City Airport, given it's location almost in the heart of London we have some of the fewest complaints about that airport than we do about any other airport in the UK. I think one of the reasons for that is people know what to expect.

I think the other thing it does is it actually creates some form of incentive to operate quieter aircraft that goes beyond the necessary international standards and therefore for that to filter through to airline purchasing decisions as well. And of course it's more flexible than hard operational restrictions that just say x number of movements or x number of passengers.

To some extent the government has taken this on board. Those of you that have read the CERAS report, a noise cap for somewhere like Heathrow is actually suggested in the consultation document itself and people's views are being sought on that. I think where we perhaps reach some disagreement is at what level is that noise cap (slide 23). We would say that in the short term there is no increase in the number of people exposed to aircraft noise and this goes back I think to the expectations that communities had in the late 1990s. They heard about Chapter 2 being phased out, about noise contour shrinking, they had realistic expectations and I think in some cases promises that the noise environment would not deteriorate after 2002. Actually again there are some regulators on say the E-cap for example that have set similar goals.

Longer term we point to the World Health Organisation guidelines. These are probably as ambitious to achieve as the ACARI targets, we realise that. I mean there is not an airport in the UK that keeps its noise exposure under 55, far from it. But as a long-term goal, something that we use to measure our progress to ultimately something that we see as sustainable, we put this forward.

And just to finish I think on the conclusions I'm not talking about noise now but looking at the bigger picture, the picture of sustainability - two or three cross-cutting issues (slide 24). The first one I think is the necessity to actually start some debate within the industry about sustainable environmental limits for the air travel sector. I feel that whether it's at ICAO, whether it's at EU level or whether it's in this room there's too much debate about the problems. I think largely now they're understood and there's too much debate about the tools. Again, we've got our menu of options, we know the range. What we need to do now is work out what those tools are going to be used for and a logical step for that is, if you have emissions trading, for example, you have to allocate a cap for the sector. What should that cap be? I think now is the time for the industry to really engage in what sort of environmental limits and targets it's prepared to accept and what message it's going to send to the rest of the world. There's certainly a need for better environmental reporting. Again, my question this morning to Keith Judd at AOA – it's not what AOA's doing or what the top 10% of airports is doing or for that matter the top 10% of airlines. It's about the other 90%. How can we bring them on board?

And I think if you look at other industries one of the biggest keys to change has always been public scrutiny and public pressure so I think more of that mandatory environmental reporting for airports and airlines. Let's actually get the information and work out where we want to go.

And finally I think closer links between the NGOs, community groups and the industry itself. At the end of the day we're not here just to sort of put obstacles in your way. We're actually sort of saying these are the perceptions on the ground. Most of them are actually underpinned by real problems and I think they set the agenda for what needs to go into a sustainable aviation policy in terms of action measures. In some cases you may disagree with that perception or our take on things. In that case I would say it's not a question of ignoring that and just saying we're wrong, it's a question of getting together, swapping ideas, communicating, educating us as to why you think our ideas are wrong. Let's have that debate. I'll actually end on that note. Thanks very much.

Chairman: Tim thanks very much for putting your case so clearly. I'm sure you've raised a number of points of interest. What I intend to do is after Roger's made his presentation to invite those speakers from today who are still in the audience to come up for a general discussion.