

ACC ENGAGEMENT WITH WIDER COMMUNITIES AROUND AIRPORTS

What this paper is about

This paper gives details of new fora set up by the DfT and CAA which aim to engage with key interested parties, specifically local communities, on matters concerning airspace and noise management policy. It also highlights concerns raised by community groups about the lack of engagement communities have with ACCs.

Points for Discussion

What local arrangements exist for ACCs to engage with their local community groups?

How often is membership of ACCs reviewed?

What action should be taken to raise the profile of both ACCs and UKACCs?

Possible Action

Whether UKACCs should request meeting with the Minister for Aviation?

Background

1. As Members will be aware, the Department for Transport (DfT) and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) have established two new groups of relevance to UKACCs member ACCs.

DfT Airspace and Noise Engagement Group (ANEG) .

2. The DfT have set up the ANEG¹. The purpose of the ANEG is to maintain a formal channel of communication between the DfT and its external airspace and noise stakeholders. It will include within its scope of discussions all aspects of national civil airspace and noise policy and will be used as a sounding board to identify, discuss and, where possible, resolve any issues in relation to these areas that impact on the work of the Department. Whilst noise will always be the primary focus, this will not prevent ANEG from considering other factors, both environmental and economic, which may be relevant to airspace and noise policy decisions. The group will maintain an oversight of relevant evidence and research, and identify implications for airspace and noise policy. Where it identifies gaps in the evidence base it can make recommendations for further research to the DfT. The group's discussions will be at a strategic policy level, and it will not debate or attempt to resolve individual, local issues.

3. ANEG has met twice - the first meeting was mostly concerned with the administrative detail of establishing the group with the second focussing on current Government and CAA consultations. A work programme has yet to be established. However although the group is intended to be a national body, membership at present seems to be very South East centric. The Secretariat has raised the issue of membership with the DfT. Whilst UKACCs has been allocated one place on the group, local interests groups have been allocated three places in addition to the Aviation Environmental Federation. The DfT commented that they considered that

“ACCs are a well-coordinated group with mechanisms to collaborate and therefore as a group can be represented by a single person. Community groups on the other hand are far less so, and we therefore need to ensure we have them adequately represented. As ACCs are not representative of communities or other bodies communities would feel they are not adequately represented if ACC's were to take their place. We need to keep places on ANEG under tight control so that the group remains manageable”

4. The Secretariat had highlighted the fact that consultative committees were statutory bodies established in accordance with DfT legislation and operate in line with DfT guidelines whilst the community groups were not statutory bodies nor subject to government guidelines. Indeed detailed information about these groups is very limited and it is difficult to ascertain the size of their membership, their constitution and how representative they are. The DfT was also reminded that the membership of some ACCs did in fact include representatives from local community groups.

CAA Community Discussion Forum

5. The CAA has established a Community Discussion Forum². This is in recognition that the CAA has been perceived as lacking community input to key projects, and would benefit from having direct input from community representatives to help understand their views. The Community Discussion Forum is one way the CAA intends to manage that, by drawing in community representatives from areas impacted by aviation across the UK. Again this Forum has met twice

6. At the initial meeting, the community representatives broadly welcomed the creation of the discussion forum, suggesting that improving two-way communications, creating greater transparency, and better mutual awareness should be its aims. It has been questioned how the CAA would act on feedback from the forum. This would depend on the feedback and project in question. For some projects (for instance the Noise Management Review), the Forum would be

¹ The purpose of ANEG <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/airspace-and-noise-engagement-group>

² [CAA Community Discussion Forum ToR](#)

able to provide input directly to the work and comment on the CAA's developing thinking, for others, there were likely to be consultation mechanisms (eg the work to revise the airspace change process) run by the CAA for formal feedback, but informal comments will help to direct the CAA's consideration.

7 At the second meeting, focus was on the CAA's consultation on the guidance underpinning its revised airspace change process. The Forum also discussed the CAA's Noise Management Review and its intention to conduct a draft community survey and the meeting was invited to comment on the draft outline of the survey.

8. Unlike ANEG, the CAA has sought to invite individual ACCs to be represented on the Forum. Unfortunately not every ACC who has been invited has managed to attend and the CAA wish to encourage greater attendance. Local interest groups had a similar attendance to that at ANEG.

Issues

9. At meetings of both ANEG and the Community Discussion Forum, there has been criticism of ACCs. This ranged from suggestions that ACCs were not representative and had little contact with community groups in their area to the claim that membership rarely changed which prevented a balanced debate. The UKACCs Secretariat reported the criticisms that had been raised to the UKACCs Working Group who agreed that the issue of how ACCs engaged with their wider communities should be a matter of discussion at the Annual Meeting. **Delegates are therefore invited to:**

- Comment on their engagement with their local community groups and whether this is regularly reviewed to ensure that it remains appropriate in the light of the changing pattern of community impact and concern.
- Share ways in which their committees keep abreast of issues of concern to the wider communities around airports.

10. The deliberations of UKACCs will be a topic of discussion at the next meeting of the CAA's Community Discussion Forum.

11. Given that community groups have managed to establish themselves with Ministers and the DfT, this suggests that there is a need to revisit the issue of the UKACCs profile and ensure that Ministers and the DfT are fully made aware of UKACCs activities and the breadth of its membership. Over the past 18 months, UKACCs has put in place new arrangements to enhance its collaborative working, effectiveness and responsiveness and has undergone a transformation to present a more modern image. The profile of UKACCs has been a topic of discussion at the Annual Meeting over the years and it is felt that given the enhanced role being proposed in the CAA's draft Airspace Design Guidance and the work the DfT is undertaking in updating the Aviation Policy Framework it would be timely to seek a meeting with the Minister. This would provide an opportunity for a small UKACCs delegation to introduce the Minister to the range of activity conducted by ACCs. This option would require at least one ACC chairman to coordinate such an approach.

12. Delegates are invited to:

- suggest what action can be taken to raise the profile of both individual ACCs and UKACCs generally.
- Consider whether a meeting with the Minister should be sought.

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