Improving the sustainability of aviation

**Aviation offers many** economic and social benefits, but at a cost. In particular, aviation creates greenhouse gas emissions and may have negative impacts on the local community, such as noise. A new report argues that a stronger evidence base establishing the true benefits and impacts of aviation is needed before any major decisions on the expansion of airports can be made.

The **aviation industry provides** jobs, boosts the economy and takes people to see new places and experience different cultures. However, it faces criticism for its negative environmental impacts. A new report used stakeholder discussions with business, industry, government, academics, NGOs and citizen groups to explore the perceived socio-economic benefits and environmental drawbacks of the industry. The report found that there is widespread disagreement on basic economic, environmental and technological data on air travel, such as:

- the contribution of aviation exhaust fumes to climate change
- the potential for technology to make significant reductions to aviation’s climate change impacts and the timescales for these improvements
- a standard system for assessing the economic costs and benefits of aviation

However, there was strong support from stakeholders for the development of more sustainable air transport policies, which would need to address five key challenges:

- Meeting society’s needs, now and in the future
- Good governance and fair fiscal treatment
- Making a fair contribution towards climate change targets
- Reducing negative impacts on people and the environment
- Building skills and the economy

The report concludes that the existing levels of uncertainty are bad for government, the aviation industry and the ordinary travelling public, and that greater certainty must be achieved. Stakeholders commented that emissions trading would form part of, but not the entire, solution and that the entire aviation industry and not just flights needed to change. Tougher emissions and noise reductions targets are called for, as well as a fair taxation system for aviation.

Stakeholders wanted greater clarity on policy not just at the national but also at the EU and global level, noting that national decisions on aviation policy should not pre-empt or undermine international policies addressing the climate impacts of aviation, such as the potential inclusion of aviation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme or the post-2012 Bali Roadmap.


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