

Report to Partnership Meeting 15 September 2017

CONSULTATION

UK Aviation Strategy - Call for Evidence

PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report invites Members to consider HITRANS draft submission in response to the Department for Transport's Call for Evidence to support the development of a new aviation strategy for the UK.

Overview

The Department for Transport is looking at how the government, working with our partners across the sector, can help airports and the industry to grow in a way that:

- is sustainable
- increases competition
- offers consumers greater choice and a quality experience

They are seeking views from across industry, business, consumers, environmental groups and anyone with an interest in aviation.

The DfT have prepared a consultation paper entitled 'Beyond the Horizon – The Future of UK Aviation' <http://bit.ly/2j3mXoS> and published a call for evidence begins the consultation process.

The call for evidence period will be followed by a series of consultations that will run throughout 2017 and 2018, culminating in the launch of the aviation strategy at the end of 2018.

The consultation paper sets out the objectives for the new aviation strategy which will aim to set out the long-term vision for aviation taking us to 2050 and beyond;

- help the aviation industry work for its customers
- ensure a safe and secure way to travel
- build a global and connected Britain
- encourage competitive markets
- support growth while tackling environmental impacts
- develop innovation, technology and skills

The consultation paper also invites feedback on the proposed key Strategy principles

- Consumer focused - it will put passengers and businesses at the centre of everything we do
- Market driven - it will emphasise the role of government as an enabler, helping to make the market work effectively

- Evidence led - it will target intervention on specific problems which government can address, avoiding activity that does not respond to a clear problem

The Call for Evidence also invites other sources of information or evidence that the government should bear in mind when developing the strategy.

HITRANS Response

In recent years HITRANS has worked closely with partner local authorities, neighbouring Regional Transport Partnerships and other organisations including HIAL, HIE and SCDI in developing a detailed evidence base to support the priorities for aviation in the Highlands and Islands in response to the UK Government Airports Commission which primarily considered issues relating to runway capacity in the South East of England and maintaining the UK's status as an international hub.

HITRANS submission to this initial Call for Evidence will seek to build on many of the key arguments submitted to the Airports Commission including the importance of securing suitable hub access to London Heathrow from Inverness and other regional airports, reducing catchment leakage and the economic benefits of direct versus connecting access.

The Highlands and Islands as a peripheral region is hampered by slow surface alternatives that mean aviation is very important for how business and leisure markets are served to other UK regions such as the Midlands, North West England, North East England and West of England. The Strategy needs to recognise the importance of connecting our region to these other regions particularly with the growing emphasis on a regional drive to economic growth with initiatives such as the Midland Engine and Northern Powerhouse meaning that if successful it is important that the Highlands and Islands has good access to these markets.

The Strategy also presents an opportunity for aviation to reduce its carbon footprint as new technology and innovation is embraced. Reference is made within the Consultation document to an opportunity for Electric Powered Aircraft seating 100 passengers to be developed. As we separately seek to develop a future proofed approach to delivering intra Scotland air services there seems to be a strong synergy that might see this new technology introduced on the air networks that serve the Highlands and Islands which would help deliver a decarbonised air system but would also allow the excess electricity generated from renewable sources in the region to offer a source of green energy to charge the batteries that power the aircraft.

Recommendation

Members are invited to;

1. Consider the key issues that HITRANS should include in responding to the Call for Evidence
2. Approve the delegation of responsibility to the Partnership Director and HITRANS Chair to develop a response on behalf of HITRANS in collaboration with partner Local Authorities in advance of the 13th October deadline.

RTS Delivery

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports RTS Strategic priority enhance regional and intra-regional connectivity

Policy

Impact - Positive

Comment – This work supports development of the Aviation policies set out in the RTS.

Financial

Impact – Positive

Budget line and value – N/A

Equality

Impact – Positive

Comment – Improving Regional and Inter-regional connectivity helps improve the competitiveness of business across the Highlands and Islands

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