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Approaches to Aviation Strategy in the UK and Republic of Ireland

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This paper examines the UK Governments White Paper, "The Future of Air Transport" which provides the strategic vision for the development of aviation across the United Kingdom (UK) up to 2030. This paper will analyse how this has been applied in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and since the publication of this document was in 2003, this paper will also consider how aviation policy has developed highlighting the Department for Transports (DfT) 2006 progress report and the 2009 House of Commons, Transport Committee report on the future of aviation.

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Key Points

- Aviation policy in the United Kingdom is a reserved matter; however, most new aviation legislation now originates at the European Union (EU) level.

- The UK Government published its strategy for the future of aviation (up to 2030) in 2003; its White Paper on "The Future of Air Transport" provides a clear policy framework for the development of airports in the United Kingdom.

- The White Paper provides the framework for a strategic balanced approach to airport development in light of increased demand on capacity.

- The White paper recommended that UK airports, which are privately owned, should maintain a master plan document to detail their development proposals taking account of conclusions on future development set out in the White Paper.

- These master plans followed a prescribed format developed by the Department for Transport.

- It was suggested that the Master Plans should take account of both the [relevant] regional spatial and transport strategies and that these in turn should take account of the airport master plans. The requirement to produce these was however, not statutory nor do the master plans have any statutory powers.

- Since the publication of the White Paper much has changed in regional aviation, particularly in Northern Ireland; where direct international links are vastly improved and both Belfast Airports and City of Derry airport have grown, as was encouraged in the White Paper.

- What has been lacking in terms of the vision for aviation in the UK is its role within the wider transport environment and this issue has been identified as a major flaw in Government Policy.

- This is something which has been addressed in the Republic of Ireland whose government takes a more holistic approach to transport planning and recognises the importance of aviation for both regional and international connectivity.

Executive Summary

Aviation's international nature means that there are few areas, apart from airport development, in which the United Kingdom (UK) is free or can effectively make policy in isolation from other countries. Most new aviation legislation now originates at the European Union (EU) level; and in the air traffic management field, through EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation.

With regards to Northern Ireland; aviation is a reserved matter and therefore, Westminster takes the lead in issuing policy directions and formulating strategy with the Government White Paper "The Future of Air Transport" published in 2003 being the most recent strategy document. In order to apply its vision regionally the Air Transport White Paper (ATWP) recommended that airport operators should maintain a master plan document to detail their development proposals; taking account of "conclusions on future development set out in the White Paper"[1].

The key theme of the ATWP is the Government's belief that a balance must be found between the need for increased airport capacity and any environmental damage this would potentially cause. Applied regionally, the Master Plans provide stakeholders with the opportunity to assess if development plans follow this ethos.

At the time of publication, the White Paper encouraged the growth of both Belfast International Airport (BIA) and Belfast City Airport (BCA) while it also suggested there was scope for publically owned City of Derry Airport (CDA) to develop. Each of the Belfast Airports has increased both passenger traffic and destinations served dramatically since then, as has City of Derry Airport. There are now 21 direct flights to Europe, as well as a direct flight to the USA (BIA to Newark, New Jersey); and 22 within the UK and Ireland. In total travellers can now access 49 direct routes/destinations from Northern Ireland.[2]

Both Belfast Airports produced Master Plans which were published in 2006 and aimed to detail their planned growth up to 2015, with an indicative look ahead to 2030. The master plans aligned themselves closely to guidance provided by the Department of Transport on content; however, the effect of location on each airport is very different. Belfast City Airport has both benefits and constraints associated with its close proximity to the city while the international airport's rural location makes it more suitable for expansion.

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[1] The White Paper (paragraph 12.8)

[2] (NITB) Northern Ireland Tourist Board (2010) "Northern Ireland Access Update – May 2010" [online] accessed 18/06/2010 available from: http://www.nitb.com/DocumentPage.aspx?path=b3448d14-e182-4420-8cd6-e77e8f976728,f19a58c1-4c6f-41e2-b408-e89b50320610,c13de633-4fe6-400c-84fd-6b887a14510e

The main constraints/restrictions currently on the City Airport, but which are under review are:

- The length of the runway;

- Planning controls;

- Early evening and night scheduling curfew;

- Restriction on aircraft seat numbers; and

- City Airport designation, under EU directive [2002/30/EC](#) which carries noise restrictions[3]

Neither Scotland nor Wales have aviation strategies, for the same reason as Northern Ireland, and both have adopted a very similar approach to developing the industry in their respective regions. The Route Development Fund has been applied in both Northern Ireland and Scotland with great success as demonstrated by the significant rise in direct flights from these regions. The Welsh assembly has enjoyed less success having only applied the EU directive in 2006 when funding allowances had been reduced.

Based on the time which had lapsed since the publication of the White Paper, the House of Commons Transport Committee announced in December 2008 its intention to conduct an inquiry into the future of aviation and the effectiveness of the White Paper. The committee intimated that it was in favour of the further development of regional airports given their contribution to their respective economies and states that choices between economic benefits and environmental costs sometimes need to be made. In criticism of the White Paper, the report did suggest that the Government needs to set out more explicitly the role envisaged for aviation within its overall transport policy as well as the inter-relationships between aviation and other transport modes.

There is no stand alone aviation strategy in the Republic of Ireland; however, unlike the situation in the UK aviation does feature prominently in the Department for Transport Statement of Strategy. It addresses issues such as airports; air services; safety and security and air traffic management. In terms of airports it commits to the continued implementation of the State Airport Act as well as "optimising the role of the regional airports in promoting more balanced regional development".

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[3] This Directive is geared to reducing noise pollution from aircraft at airports. Four European city airports; Berlin-Tempelhof, Stockholm Bromma, London City and Belfast City apply its standards, see: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/environment/noise_pollution/l28068_en.htm

Contents

1 Introduction

Aviation's international nature means that there are few areas, apart from airport development, in which the United Kingdom (UK) is free or can effectively, make policy in isolation from other countries. Most new aviation legislation now originates at the European Union (EU) level; and in the air traffic management field, through EUROCONTROL, the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation. On wider European issues the UK Government co-operate closely with the 40 other countries in the European Civil Aviation Conference (ECAC). Globally, they co-operate with the 188 signatories to the Chicago Convention, working through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).[4]

With regards to Northern Ireland; aviation is a reserved matter and therefore, Westminster takes the lead in issuing policy directions and formulating strategy. Recently, however, Regional Development Minister, Conor Murphy MP when asked during question time if '*it would be helpful if there was greater responsibility for and greater influence on the development of airports'* [held by the Assembly]; to which he responded that; '*while the responsibility for aviation strategy did currently lie with Westminster he would be happy to explore with colleagues; the possibility of devolving this'*.[5]

The most up-to-date aviation strategy in the UK is the Government's White Paper "The Future of Air Transport", published in December 2003. This paper will examine the White Paper document and analyse how this has been applied in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This paper will also look at how aviation policy has developed since the 2003 publication highlighting the Department for Transports (DfT) 2006 progress report and the 2009 transport committee report on the future of aviation.

2 The future of air transport

The Government's White Paper "The Future of Air Transport", published in December 2003, aimed to provide a clear policy framework for the development of airports in the United Kingdom over a 30 year period, with the key message that development must be sustainable, i.e. it must seek to balance the positive economic and social benefits against the negative environmental impacts such as climate change, local air quality and noise disturbance around airports.

Retrospectively, the view held among airport operators and aviation experts was that the Air Transport White Paper (ATWP) was necessary and in research published in 2010 they have identified a clear rationale behind its development:[6]

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[4] DfT (2010) "An introduction to air" [online] accessed: 16/06/2010 available from: http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/aviation/introtoair
[5] AQ 1458/10 (Supplementary) June 22nd 2010
[6] Ipsos MORI (2010) "Assessing the Future of Air Transport White Paper as a strategic framework for sustainable airport development" [online] accessed 06/06/2010 available from: http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/aviation/airports/

- The extent of growth in aviation prior to the ATWP;

- The need for a government lead on aviation policy;

- The need to co-ordinate a long term national strategy;

- The need for debate amongst stakeholders;

- The need to recognise the economic importance of aviation; and

- The need for a sustainable approach to airport growth.

2.1 Conclusions of Air Transport White Paper (ATWP)

2.1.1 Industry Growth

Between 1980 and 2006, total traffic at UK airports grew from 58 million to 235 million passengers, an average annual growth rate of 5.5%, with more significant growth in regional airport traffic compared to London.[7] In recent years there has been a slight decline in passenger number; as shown in figure one. This is in contrast to the view held in the White Paper; that growth would continue indefinitely. However, although there has been a slight decline there are too many external factors which could have contributed to this to suggest it is anything other than temporary. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that in the long term demand will increase, albeit not at the forecasted rate and as a result capacity at airports will also have to increase.
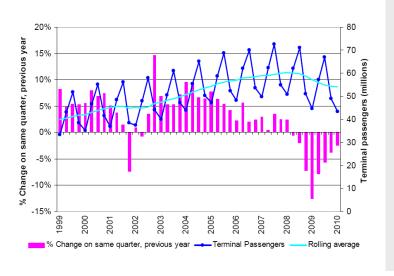
Figure 1: Terminal Passengers[8] at UK Airports

Plotting quarterly passenger data over the last ten years shows both seasonal and annual trends in UK aviation activity. The dark blue line shows the number of terminal passengers in the UK airports in each quarter (right axis). The bright blue line shows the same, but for the rolling annual average in each quarter.

The pink bars show the percentage growth on the previous year's number in the same quarter (on the left axis). The year-on-year contraction in passenger numbers continued in quarter 1 2010, with a 2.4% reduction, although the pace of contraction has been declining since quarter 1 2009.

Source: Civil Aviation Authority[9]

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[7] (CAA) Civil Aviation Authority (2007) Air Services at UK Regional Airports: An Update on Developments [online] accessed 08/06/2010 available from: http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP775.pdf

[8] UK Terminal Passengers are those passengers who board or disembark an aircraft on a commercial flight at a UK airport

2.1.2 A Balanced Approach

The White Paper presented the Government's belief that a balance must be found between the need for increased capacity and any environmental damage this would potentially cause, this balance must:

- recognise the importance of air travel to our national and regional economic prosperity, and that not providing additional capacity where it is needed would significantly damage the economy and national prosperity;

- reflect people's desire to travel further and more often by air, and to take advantage of the affordability of air travel and the opportunities this brings;

- seek to reduce and minimise the impacts of airports on those who live nearby and on the natural environment;

- ensure that, over time, aviation pays the external costs its activities impose on society at large – in other words, that the price of air travel reflects its environmental and social impacts;

- minimise the need for airport development in new locations by making best use of existing capacity where possible;

- respect the rights and interests of those affected by airport development; and

- provide greater certainty for all concerned in the planning of future airport capacity, but at the same time is sufficiently flexible to recognise and adapt to the uncertainties inherent in long-term planning.

2.2 Airport Master plans

Although the ATWP provides the policy for aviation and air transport for all UK regions, it must be applied locally within each region. In order to do this the ATWP recommended that airport operators should maintain a master plan document[10] to detail their development proposals; taking account of "conclusions on future development set out in the White Paper"[11].

> *"This White Paper sets out a strategic framework for the development of airport capacity in the United Kingdom over the next 30 years, against the background of wider developments in air transport. It does not itself authorise or preclude any particular development, but sets out a policy framework against which the relevant public bodies, airport operators and*

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[9] See: www.caa.co.uk/docs/80/ERG_AviationTrends_Q1_2010.pdf
[10] The White Paper (paragraphs 12.7)
[11] The White Paper (paragraph 12.8)

airlines can plan and which will guide decisions on future planning applications."[12]

The ATWP stresses the master plans do not have development plan status[13] but rather, they should provide a clear statement of intent on the part of an airport operator that will enable future development of the airport to be given due consideration in local and regional planning processes.[14] It further suggested that these plans should take account of both the [relevant] regional spatial and transport strategies and that these in turn should take account of the airport master plans.[15]

This direction would appear to give some credibility to the importance of master plans and their role within local and regional development. However, Master Plans do not have any statutory basis, a point that was identified as a weakness in a recent review of ATWP; it was recognised that airport operators, while maybe being encouraged, **are not obliged to follow their plans and therefore the level of compliance varies.**[16]

According to the same research, carried out by Ipsos MORI on behalf of the Department for Transport, the master plans were, despite not being statutory, considered a vital output of the ATWP; providing stakeholders with transparency around the proposed future of regional airports.[17] This transparency was welcomed by stakeholders as it had the ability to abate fears held, primarily by residents and environmental groups, about possible future expansion.[18] The role of the master plans as suggested by the ATWP and DfT guidance was to:

- **Provide a 30 year timeframe for planning** – planning documents already in place were generally only looking forward a maximum of 10 years.

- **Encourage thorough consultation process** - some operators believed they would have engaged in some way with stakeholders about their proposals, but the ATWP and master plan guidance triggered a far more rigorous and extensive consultation process than would otherwise have taken place.

- **Encourage a holistic approach** pulling together disparate planning documents into a single joined-up plan.

- **Make airport development plans accessible to the public -** operators were able to produce transparent public-facing documents as the ATWP provided them with government backing for their proposals.

- **Focus on sustainability of development proposals** – the ATWP ensured airport master plans were considering the environmental and social implications of their development proposals as well as the economic gains.

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[12] White Paper (Page 9)
[13] The white Paper (paragraph 12.7)
[14] (DfT) Department for Transport (2004) "Guidance on the Preparation of Airport Master Plans" [online] accessed: 07/06/2010 available from: http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/whitepapers/air/pwpa/guidanceonthepreparationofai5682
[15] The Whiter Paper (paragraph 12.9)
[16] Ipsos MORI (2010) "Assessing the Future of Air Transport White Paper as a strategic framework for sustainable airport development" [online] accessed 06/06/2010 available from: http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/aviation/airports/ (Page 61)
[17] Ibid (Page 40)
[18] Ibid (Page 41)

The DfT 'envisaged' master plans would address the following 'core' areas:

- Forecasts;

- infrastructure proposals;

- safeguarding and land/property take;

- surface access initiative's

- impact on people and the natural environment; and

- proposals to minimise and mitigate impacts.[19]

2.3 2006 Progress Report

In 2006 the Government published a progress report on the Air Transport White Paper. The major changes included giving more prominence to climate change issues, reflecting the Stern Review and recommended policies such as offsetting and emphasised its commitment to taking part in the European Union (EU) emissions trading scheme (ETS). There was also greater emphasis on the local environmental impacts of aviation with the inclusion of the Civil Aviation Act 2006, which introduces measures to strengthen and clarify airports' powers to control noise and local air quality. This Act allows airports to penalise the noisiest and most polluting aircraft.[20]

3   Aviation in Northern Ireland

At the time of publication, the White Paper encouraged the growth of both Belfast International Airport (BIA) and Belfast City Airport (BCA) while it also suggested there was scope for publically owned City of Derry Airport (CDA) to develop. Each of these airports had distinct roles at the time, with BIA having the only direct international flight, (Northern Ireland had only one direct flight to Europe in 2003) it served the major hubs in London and Manchester; BCA served the UK's regional airports while CDA served the market for air services in the north west of the island of Ireland with cross border links and one scheduled flight to London Stansted.

Each of the Airports has increased both passenger traffic and destinations served dramatically since then. There are now 21 direct flights to Europe, as well as a direct flight to the USA (BIA to Newark, New Jersey); and 22 within the UK and Ireland. In

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[19] (DfT) Department for Transport (2004) "Guidance on the Preparation of Airport Master Plans" [online] accessed: 17/06/2010 available from:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/whitepapers/air/pwpa/guidanceonthepreparatio nofai5682

[20] Information summarised from: DfT (2006) "Air Transport White Paper 2006 Progress Report" [online] accessed 16/06/2010 available from:
http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/about/strategy/whitepapers/air/aviationprogressreportsection/a viationprogressreport?page=2

total travellers can now access 49 directs routes/destinations from Northern Ireland.[21] The growth in international flights has been so great they accounted for just over 40 per cent of the 5.2 million passenger trips in 2008[22] from BIA.

3.1 Route Development Fund

While a lot of the increase in Air Travel is a result of low cost airlines which were made possible by industry deregulation, Route Development Funds were a considerable factor in the UK regions i.e. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Northern Ireland the Air Route Development Fund (ARDF) was launched in 2003 and committed £3.8 million, with the objective of encouraging new air routes to Northern Ireland. Commenting on the success of the scheme, the then Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, Maria Eagle MP said:

> *"The Air Route Development Fund has stimulated the introduction of a number of new air routes to Northern Ireland, which have greatly improved access between here and the rest of Europe, and also North America".[23]*

Route Development funds are a byproduct of the White Paper as well as the European Commission's Transport White Paper which had the aim of improving transport connections between all areas of the European Union. The objectives of RDF's are to:[24]

- create net economic benefits for the region in which the Fund is operating by improving the connectivity between the UK regions and their domestic and European counterparts;

- make best use of existing and potentially available capacity at regional airports; and

- help to ease pressure on capacity bottlenecks, current and prospective, at airports in the London system.

The RDF was designed to work with the market to support new air services between European Cities by sharing risk during the start-up period. The Fund supported new routes by offering discounts on airport aeronautical charges and gave assistance in marketing the route for up to three years. Under it, offers were made of up to 50% of the cumulative aeronautical and marketing costs.

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[21] (NITB) Northern Ireland Tourist Board (2010) "Northern Ireland Access Update – May 2010" [online] accessed 18/06/2010 available from: http://www.nitb.com/DocumentPage.aspx?path=b3448d14-e182-4420-8cd6-e77e8f976728,f19a58c1-4c6f-41e2-b408-e89b50320610,c13de633-4fe6-400c-84fd-6b887a14510e

[22] Belfast International Airport [online] accessed: 10/06/2010 available from: http://www.belfastairport.com/en/content/8/156/key-facts.html

[23] DETI (2006) "Air route Development fund ends on a successful note" [online] accessed: 19/06/2010 available from: http://archive.nics.gov.uk/eti/061220g-eti.htm

[24] DfT (2003) "A national protocol for UK route development funds" [online] accessed 18/06/2010 available from: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.dft.gov.uk/pgr/aviation/domestic/anationalprotocolforukrouted2873?page=2

3.2 Belfast International Airport

The Air Transport White Paper confirmed that BIA would remain by far the largest airport in Northern Ireland with significant potential for growth in the future. By 2030, forecasts suggest demand may increase from around 4 million passengers per annum (mppa) (in 2003) to between 8mppa and 9mppa.[25] It was also recognised as the major freight and flown mail airport in Northern Ireland and it was envisaged that this activity will also continue to expand[26]. In addition the White Paper supports the further development of the Airport within its existing boundaries[27].

3.2.1 Belfast International Airport Master Plan

In line with the Government's requirement to produce an airport specific master plan, Belfast International Airport launched its draft Master Plan for consultation on 12th September 2006[28]. The Master Plan's main aim is to consider, in some detail, the sustainable growth of Belfast International Airport up to 2015, while also looking ahead to 2030. It was envisaged that this document would then provide all stakeholders including government, the private sector and ordinary citizens with all the information to consider how they might be affected by the Airport's development and make informed decisions. The main considerations addressed in the document are closely aligned to the core areas identified in DfT guidance; these are:

- **The regulatory and policy context in which the airport operates;** like all other UK airports BIA is subject to aviation legislation which is reserved, it is also regulated by local planning policy;[29]

- **Growth in demand;** while DfT have provided forecasts for all regional airports these have underestimated growth at BIA who therefore provides it own forecasts. It forecasts that Belfast International Airport will grow to around 6.9m ppa by 2015, rising to 10.4m ppa by 2030;[30]

- **The socio-economic impact;** the master plan suggests there will be 7,000 direct jobs created by 2030 made up of both construction and permanent jobs. In addition it suggests there is great potential for indirect or induced employment as a result of the airport growing via tourism and the attraction of inward investment;[31]

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[25] The White Paper (paragraphs 7.10)

[26] The White Paper (paragraphs 7.11)

[27] The White Paper (paragraphs 7.12)

[28] Belfast International Airport [online] accessed: 10/06/2010 available from:
http://www.belfastairport.com/en/content/8/1522/master-plan.html

[29] See section 3.2 (page 17): (BIA) Belfast International Airport (2006) "Mater Plan 05/30" [online] accessed 16/06/2010 available from: http://www.belfastairport.com/en/content/8/1522/master-plan.html

[30] BIA Mate Plan (page 20)

[31] BIA Master Plan (page 25)

- **Airport infrastructure development;** the plans up to 2015 are to expand the existing terminal while between 2016-30 it forecasts that increased demand will dictate the requirement of a new terminal;[32]

- **Surface access infrastructure;** The White Paper required the 'development or revision of long-term surface access strategies to accompany the preparation of airport Master Plans' although it did indicate that Northern Ireland airports were unlikely to need any development in this area before 2015, however, for the 2016-30 period the master plan states the following key developments will need to be fully evaluated:

  o Enhanced highway links between the Airport and the M2 and probably the M1 motorways;

  o A passenger rail connection to the Airport; and

  o Improved public transport services direct to/from the Airport for all parts of the region.[33]

- **Environmental impacts and mitigation;** The Master Plan considers a number of environmental issues such as, noise, biodiversity and waste as well as effects on community and cultural heritage; and

- **Climate Change;** The master plan commits to addressing this issue by incorporating sustainable practices throughout all operations.

3.3 Belfast City Airport

The White paper recognised that Belfast City Airport was well suited to business travel given its proximity to the city centre and forecasted the potential for growth if some of the restrictions under which it operated were reduced or removed. BCA had operated under a Planning Agreement between itself and the Department of the Environment since January 1997. The Agreement sets out a series of obligations and restrictions on the operation of BCA which are summarised here:

- The length of the runway;

- Planning controls;

- Early evening and night scheduling curfew;

- Restriction on aircraft seat numbers;

In addition BCA is designated as a 'City Airport' under EU directive [2002/30/EC](#) which carries noise restrictions[34]

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[32] BIA Master Plan (page 33)
[33] BIA Master Plan (page 36)

3.3.1 Belfast City Airport Master Plan

In its Master Plan document BCA provided a statement of intent, in which it suggested that while it continues to focus on domestic flights it would actively seek out new markets in Europe and more long haul destinations.[35] In terms of predicted growth (Forecasts) the master plan expected a 2-3% annual growth which would see passengers per annum reach just over 3.1 million by 2030 (see table 1); this of course would be subject to the removal or reduction of current restrictions.

Table 1: Forecasted Passenger Numbers 2005 - 2030

Passengers - 2005   = 2,217,000

Passengers - 2015   = 2,900,000

Passengers - 2030   = 3,173,000[36]

A modified Planning Agreement between the Department of the Environment and BCA was announced in October 2008. Under the terms of the modified agreement:

- Total Air Traffic Movements were capped at 48,000 per year.

- The 'Seats for Sale' cap was increased from 1.5 million to 2 million with provisions for monitoring noise included.[37]

The Environment Minister, Edwin Poots, has announced that he is considering lifting the seats for sale restriction at BCA, subject to consultation.[38]

Other sections included in the BCA master plan included:

- **Land use development**; The master plan indicated BCA's intention to assess the feasibility of either extending the runway or adding a 'starter strip'[39] and subsequently they submitted a request for planning permission in 2008. The proposal seeks full planning permission for a runway extension, however, due to the level of controversy associated with the plans the Planning Appeals Commission (PAC) have been directed to hold a public inquiry.[40]

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[34] This Directive is geared to reducing noise pollution from aircraft at airports. Four European city airports; Berlin-Tempelhof, Stockholm Bromma, London City and Belfast City apply its standards, see: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/environment/noise_pollution/l28068_en.htm

[35] (BCA) Belfast City Airport (2006) "Belfast City Airport Master Plan to 2030" [online] accessed 18/06/2010 available from: http://www.belfastcityairport.com/getdoc/b4ab44b4-927a-4427-baf3-a39e55119356/BCA-Master-Plan-2005.aspx

[36] Ibid (paragraph 7.3 page 16)

[37] NI Executive (2008) "Modified planning agreement reached for George Best Belfast City Airport" [online] accessed 22/06/2010 available from: http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-doe/news-doe-october-2008/news-doe-17102008-modified-planning-agreement.htm

[38] NI Executive (2010) "Poots to consider lifting seats for sale restriction at George Best Belfast City Airport" [online] accessed 21/06/2010 available from: http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-doe/news-doe-040610-poots-to-consider.htm

[39] BCA Master Plan (paragraph 8.2)

[40] NI Executive (2010) "Poots announces airport public inquiry" [online] accessed 21/06/2010 available from: http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/news/news-doe/news-doe-march-2010/news-160310-poots-announces-airport.htm

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- **Surface access;** The master plan indicated its hope to benefit from measures in the Belfast Metropolitan Transport Plan such as a rail halt at Hollywood Exchange and the Rapid Transit System which are still under consideration.

- **Safeguarding and public safety zones;** All major civil aerodromes in the UK are subject to 'Safeguarding' which limits the size, location etc of ground obstacles[41] while public safety zones are "designated areas of land at the end of runways within which development is restricted in order to minimise the risk of casualties on the ground in the event of an aircraft accident".[42]

- **Mitigation measures;** This section deals with how BCA plans to adhere to the UK Sustainable Aviation Strategy and how it will mitigate the adverse affects of aviation on the local community.

4   Aviation in Scotland

There is no regional aviation strategy for Scotland, and aviation is addressed only briefly in the Scottish National Transport Strategy mainly in regards to emissions. Other issues around aviation in Scotland worth noting include Highlands and Islands Airports Ltd (HIAL) which is owned by the Scottish Government. The company operates and manages 11 Airports at Barra, Benbecula, Campbeltown, Dundee, Islay, Inverness, Kirkwall, Stornoway, Sumburgh, Tiree and Wick. HIAL's airports are vital to the social and economic welfare of the areas they serve, but are loss making, and are supported by subsidies from the Scottish Government in accordance with Section 34 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982.

The Scottish Government also operate an air discount scheme for island and remote highlands residents and subsidises a small network of Public Service Obligation routes serving remote islands from Glasgow. The Scottish Government also operated a successful Route Development Fund which is under review:

> "The Fund has contributed to a dramatic improvement in Scotland's direct international air network by concentrating only on those routes that helped business and in-bound tourism; as at January 2010, 31 routes continue to operate as result of investment from the Fund".[43]

5   Aviation in Wales

Belfast International Airport is owned by Abertis, a leading European infrastructure company who also control Luton (London) and Cardiff airports.[44] The content of Cardiff

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[41] BCA Master Plan (Paragraph 10.1)
[42] BCA Master Plan (Paragraph 10.2)
[43] Scottish Government (2010) "About the Air Route Development Fund" [online] accessed 19/06/2010 available from: http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Transport/19675/air-route-dev-fund/about-air-rdf
[44] See: www.abertisairports.com.

airport's master plan is almost identical in structure to that for Northern Ireland, differing only in terms of local information.

The Welsh Transport strategy – [One Wales: Connecting the Nation](#) touches only briefly on aviation and airports, identifying Wales commitment to tackling emissions. It goes on to discuss Cardiff International Airport which is the only international airport in Wales, and highlights the importance of ground links with England, the need for rail connections and the improvement of public transport links. For Cardiff International Airport specifically, it states that the first preference will be to improve rail and bus connections but a surface access strategy is being developed to bring together all proposals for passenger access.

The strategy further highlights the importance of ground links with England as airports in Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham provide Wales's main access to air services. To address the lack of air services in Wales, the Welsh Assembly, Like in Northern Ireland, employed a Route Development Fund (RDF). However, speaking at the House of Commons Select Committee for Welsh affairs Martin Evans, External Research Fellow of the Wales Transport Research Centre of the University of Glamorgan stated:

> *"…the route development fund in Wales was very late compared with those route development funds* [in Scotland and Northern Ireland]*; there have been changes to the amount of support that can be given through route development, and so that has not had the success that we have seen elsewhere in the United Kingdom".*[45]

6   House of Commons Transport Committee Report on the Future of Aviation

Based on the time which had lapsed since the publication of the White Paper, the House of Commons Transport Committee announced in December 2008 its intention to conduct an inquiry into:

a) the value of aviation to the UK economy, the roles of London and regional airports and competition from airports abroad;

b) the adequacy of the current airport infrastructure and how it should be developed;

c) the extent to which rail might provide an alternative to short-haul flights;

d) the social and environmental costs of aviation and the implications for aviation of the Climate Change Act;

e) the impact of taxation on the aviation sector and protection of passengers in the case of an airline collapse, and

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[45] See: http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmselect/cmwelaf/58/8120902.htm

f) the impact on aviation of changes to security.

6.1 Committee recommendations

It concluded that the 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Air Transport,* continues to provide a sound basis for aviation policy. It identifies the likely airport infrastructure requirements without authorising or precluding them. What it did suggest, in reference to the value of aviation to the economy was that it is important; and with the role of regional airports becoming more important, The Government is right to support the sensible development of air transport in the UK. It further states that choices between economic benefits and environmental costs sometimes need to be made but the "balanced strategy", set out in the 2003 Air Transport White Paper, which requires a good evidence base, remains a sound approach.

As shown previously when addressing the transport strategies of Scotland and Wales', aviation is only a small component. This point was emphasised Dr Givoni and Professor Banister of Oxford University in their evidence to the committee; they contend that airport development has been considered largely in isolation from other transport modes and that surface access to airports has been treated as an ancillary issue. Furthermore, The Institution of Civil Engineers urges that future airport expansion should be considered as "part of a wider integrated national transport strategy rather than as single infrastructure projects" and that smaller regional airports should be part of an "integrated national transport strategy".

Overall then the Committee for Transport report suggests that the Government needs to set out more explicitly the role envisaged for aviation within its overall transport policy as well as the inter-relationships between aviation and other transport modes.

6.2 Government response

The Government responded to the Transport Committee's recommendations in March 2010.[46] In reference to the call for aviation to be more prominent in overall transport policy they wrote:

> *"The National Policy Statement (NPS) on Airports, intends to build on that strategy, setting it in the context of our wider policy framework for transport, in order to support the sustainable delivery of airport infrastructure for the benefit of air transport users and the wider UK economy. The Airports NPS, which we intend to publish in draft in 2011, will be subject to an appraisal of sustainability, consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny. Any future capacity growth supported by the NPS will need to be consistent with our climate change goals. We also recognise that it will be important, when preparing*

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[46] House of Commons (2010) "The future of aviation: Government response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2009–10" [online] accessed 17/06/2010 available from:
http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmtran/388/388.pdf

the Airports NPS, to consider all developments which are relevant to the aviation sector, including those in other transport sectors".[47]

Further comments from the government include:

- an indication that they will publish updated aviation forecasts and updated assessments of the benefits of airport expansion in 2010, potentially alongside the Government's response to advice from the Committee on Climate Change in relation to the Government's target to reduce aviation CO2 emissions to below 2005 levels by 2050;[48] and

- A proposal to commission research to improve the evidence base on the importance of international connectivity by air to economic growth at a national and regional level.[49]

7   Republic of Ireland

7.1 Airports

Unlike in the UK the main International airports in Ireland remain under state ownership. The Dublin, Shannon and Cork Airport Authorities (Formerly known collectively as Aer Rianta) are Public Limited Companies (PLC), formed as a result of the 2004, State Airports Act. The Act vested in each authority the powers to manage and develop their respective Airport with the primary objective of ensuring that Irish airports are efficient and have appropriate infrastructure to meet the current and future needs of the users.[50] In addition to these airports there are a number of regional airports, notably Ireland West Airport, Knock, in county Mayo, which lays claim to being Ireland's fourth international airport.[51] There are other regional airports in Counties Kerry, Galway, Sligo, and Donegal.

7.2 Development

Like in the rest of Europe the power to legislate for anything other than airport management and development is limited; and the State Airport Act is a good example of this. In terms of national development strategy however, there is more scope to include aviation and airports. Transport 21 is a capital investment framework under the National Development Plan through which the transport system in Ireland will be developed, over the period 2006 to 2015; during which €34 billion will be invested. Under Transport 21 €86 million has been approved for investment Regional Airports to improve infrastructure; including Ireland West Airport Knock; Kerry Airport; Sligo

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Airport; Donegal Airport; Waterford South East Regional Airport and Galway Airport under the Capital Expenditure Grant Scheme. The scheme will address:

- Safety and security;

- Infrastructure and equipment upgrades; and

- Development projects such as runway and terminal improvements[52]

Speaking at the announcement of this funding, Irish Transport Minister. Martin Cullen TD stated:

> *"This unprecedented level of investment reflects the Government's conviction that the regional airports have a key role to play in facilitating balanced regional development. Transport 21 is all about building better links to bring communities together and to ensure that the benefits of our national prosperity are shared throughout the island. This grant aid will substantially boost the ability of the regional airports and contribute to that process by attracting inward investment and generating additional tourism business."[53]*

There is no stand alone aviation strategy in the Republic of Ireland; however, unlike the situation in the UK aviation does feature prominently in the Department for Transport Statement of Strategy. It addresses issue such as airports; air services; safety and security and air traffic management. In terms of airports it commits to the continued implementation of the State Airport Act as well as "optimising the role of the regional airports in promoting more balanced regional development".[54]

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[52] Transport 21 (2010) Regional Airports [online] accessed: 20/06/2010 available from:
http://www.transport21.ie/Projects/Regional_Airports/Regional_Airports.html
[53] Transport 21 (2007) "Cullen announces €86 million capital grants package for the regional airports" [online] accessed 20/06/2010 available from:
http://www.transport21.ie/MEDIA/Press_Releases/Cullen_announces_86_million_capital_grants_package_for_the_regional_airports.html
[54] Department for Transport (2005) "Statement of Strategy" [online] accessed 23/06/2010 available from:
http://www.transport.ie/upload/general/9449-0.pdf