Written evidence submitted by the Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport (ADEPT) (AAS0012)

What is ADEPT?

ADEPT represents place directors from county, unitary and combined authorities, along with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), sub-national transport boards and corporate partners drawn from key service sectors throughout England. It is a professional membership organisation with:

- 85+ county, unitary and combined authority members
- 3 sub-national transport bodies
- 14 local enterprise partnerships (LEPs)
- 21 Corporate Partner members.

The key to unlocking economic recovery and renewal lies with local leadership. Place directors create the strategies, run the services and lead the projects that shape local places for their communities. The whole country benefits from investment in local place. Tackling inequality and climate change, while promoting health and wellbeing, supporting business and maintaining critical infrastructure is most successful when national investment is locally led.

ADEPT represents members' interests by proactively engaging central government on emerging policy and issues, responding to consultations and enquiries, creating national guidance, and promoting initiatives aimed at influencing government policy. ADEPT also represent public sector interests across all our key areas in national sectoral organisations.

Recovery of the UK aviation sector

ADEPT recognises the importance of all transport modes in the support of the UK's recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic. The development of the virtual meeting culture over the last 18 months has made a significant contribution to our response to the climate crisis by reducing the need for employees to travel. It is likely that these behaviours will continue as, compared to face-to-face meetings that involve air travel, virtual meetings offer significant time and cost savings.

The local economic impact of the pandemic has been noticeable, with many jobs affected in a range of services that also provide for wider needs locally such as catering, facilities management and logistics. The value of local airports as major employment providers should not be underestimated. However, any additional government financial, regulatory and other help to support the recovery of the aviation sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic must be balanced with the government's commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2050.

The traffic light system for international travel

ADEPT has no view on the traffic light system for international travellers.

The cost of international travel

ADEPT has no view on the cost of international travel.

Border readiness

ADEPT has no view on border readiness.

Regional and global connectivity

The aspirations of the aviation sector must be balanced with the interests of the whole nation, with the arguments for shorter term economic prosperity considered in the context of a potential longer-term climate emergency.

Central government, sub-national transport bodies and National Highways should work with airport providers and local councils to encourage new and innovative funding models and develop a more collaborative, partnership-based approach to balance economic, environmental and community needs, with the development of new or existing infrastructure.

Existing regional aviation infrastructure is an undervalued asset and has a real potential to become a hub for sustainable change. Regional hubs could become the testbed of zero emission aviation (i.e. electric planes) and help drive change more widely across the aviation sector. They could also help to improve the sustainability of surface access transport, by reducing the distance between the airport and passengers and freight's origin / destination.

The government should explore how regional hub airports could transform

short haul flights, improve connectivity, and help with the movement of freight around the country. Greater investment and political support for regional hub airports could also help to address economic inequalities by creating new jobs and supporting economic growth.

Sustainability

At present, there is a mismatch in aspirations and opinions relating to the extent passenger growth can be sustained up to 2050, while pursuing a net-zero emissions agenda. A roadmap published by the Sustainable Aviation Industry coalition suggests that the sector believes it can accommodate a 70% increase in passengers by 2050 and achieve net zero emissions[1]. However, the Climate Change Committee (CCC) in turn suggests this is "highly unlikely to be feasible by 2050"[2].

The government's current strategy to addressing carbon emissions associated with domestic aviation is set out within the Department for Transport's (DfT) Transport Decarbonisation Plan. The strategy does not require any change in people's travel behaviour; instead it is reliant upon technological innovation, such as the development and widespread adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF). There is a significant risk that if new technologies do not deliver the anticipated results, the UK will be unable to meet its targets for achieving net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

In seeking to decarbonise aviation it is important that the government considers carbon emissions associated with all aspects of the sector. The carbon emissions associated with the aviation sector go far wider than its boundary fence and include surface access to / from the airport. To deliver net zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 the government must work with the aviation sector and local authorities to help manage and mitigate the adverse environmental impacts relating from surface access to airports (e.g. air quality and congestion). This may require the provision of new powers to local authorities to help them manage and mitigate such impacts.

The government must work with the aviation sector and local authorities to ensure airports and communities are connected by attractive, high quality sustainable transport connections. Both to facilitate long-distance passenger travel to / from airports, but also enable workers to travel to / from the airport by non-car modes of transport. Furthermore, as the freight industry becomes ever more dependent on aviation, the government must work with the

aviation sector to ensure that this increased economic dependence is balanced with the associated environmental impacts.

It is also important that government continues to develop alternative, lower carbon transport modes that provide an equivalent journey / convenience experience and consider a mechanism to discourage air travel. Levying a fuel tax, such as implemented by USA, Canada and Japan, for example, could be a phased alternative to Air Passenger Duty and subsequently could be ringfenced for research investment into greener technologies, creating alternatives to aviation travel.

The government must also look beyond domestic aviation emissions and address the aviation sectors emissions on an international platform. The government must help coordinate international decarbonisation approaches to ensure that the UK avoids competitive distortion and carbon leakage.

To ensure that the UK meets its targets of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, the government must embed realistic and measurable climate change imperatives into future aviation policy across what is a predominantly commercial sector.

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Endnotes

[1] Sustainable Aviation (2019) Sustainable Aviation Carbon Road-Map: A path to Net Zero. [Online]. Available from: https://www.sustainableaviation.co.uk/ [Accessed 23 September 2021].
[2] Committee on Climate Change (2019) Net-zero and the approach to international aviation and shipping emissions. [Online]. Available from: https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Letter-from-Lord-Deben-to-Grant-Shapps-IAS.pdf [Accessed 23 September 2021].