

SESSION THREE – GETTING THE BEST FROM INFRASTRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS – INTRODUCTION BY ALEXANDER TER KUILE SESSION CHAMPION (STANDING IN FOR PAUL BARRON)

Thank you ladies and gentlemen for giving me the opportunity to speak to you again. I am here as the session champion, standing in for Paul Barron, who unfortunately can't be with us today.

We learned much from our joint airport and ANSP workshop on Monday. Whether exploring the practical environmental solutions being implemented on the ground and in the air, considering the hurdles to future step-change improvements, or discussing issues around community engagement and addressing public concerns, it was clear that infrastructure providers both recognize, and are actively working to deliver on, their environmental responsibilities.

Several key themes emerged from the presentations and discussions throughout the day. Firstly, trade-offs are a huge challenge, in terms of practical solutions and communications and decision-making. We simply don't know enough in many areas to be making the right calls, and where we do have the information, we find that communicating the issues and satisfying all parties becomes difficult or impossible. If you please an airline then the local community will be up in arms; if you please the community then the airline will be protesting at your door. It's well-known that we face a trade-off between noise and emissions, but we also see difficult trade-offs over emissions and capacity, emissions, noise and punctuality, safety and efficiency, civil and military, commercial and private /general aviation, and between industry and society in general.

Sometimes a political decision has been taken to favour one factor over the other – as in the case of Zurich's NOx limits. In other circumstances, there is a complete lack of political leadership or regulatory guidance – as NATS found with its recent airspace change consultation. Both approaches carry advantages and disadvantages, but what is clear is that it is the airport or the ANSP in the firing line.

This was the second major theme of the day – the fact that, even though airports and ATM are responsible for a relatively small amount of emissions, they are just as visible a symbol of aviation's environmental impact as airlines. So our respective sectors have learnt to take the criticism on the chin, and take action wherever possible to improve both their image and performance.

And some of that action is considerable – LFV group presented its innovative work on climate neutrality, showing just how green an airport can be. Airservices Australia explained how it is working to reduce emissions by flextracks and other measures. Along with Airways NZ and the FAA, it is part of the ASPIRE programme to reduce emissions across the pacific. The FAA has instigated a similar project across the Atlantic, working with the EU and European ANSPs. NATS have set an ambitious target of a 10% reduction in CO2 per flight by 2020. These projects and many others are aimed at delivering real environmental improvements over the next few years.

But as the work on noise reduction at Schiphol airport demonstrated, people have very clear perceptions of their quality of life, and ultimately only system-wide co-operation and the building in of environmental solutions at the start will begin to make the difference many communities want to see. We have considerable challenges in creating and measuring metrics for improvement – especially in the realm of community engagement. We also have a regulatory environment that in many ways is not fit for purpose, and a lack of political leadership, through which an understanding of the many political, social, economic and environmental trade-offs can be debated.

While these problems can only be overcome with the political will of the states, there is much more that we can be doing ourselves, and most important of all, doing it as “one system”. Airports and ANSPs can take the lead by setting mutually-agreed and complimentary targets for environmental improvements, reducing emissions while increasing capacity and performance. The ability to optimize gate-to-gate operations is in our grasp if we can find ways to work together more effectively. Another theme which emerged from the discussions was that it sometimes only takes a tiny change to make a significant difference.

So it is clear that while there are many challenges ahead of us, workshops such as we held yesterday can identify solutions, or the beginnings of solutions, which will have a major impact both on the environmental performance of aviation infrastructure, and on how that performance is communicated to the public. Our aim now must be to take that spirit of co-operation and debate, and make it a constant reality, not only between airports and ATM, but across the whole of our industry, making air transport truly, “one system.”

I have been asked to suggest some questions which the panel may wish to explore in this session. On the airports side, are we seeing emissions and climate change become a more important issue than noise? Is noise falling off the agenda?

As airport infrastructure reaches capacity, how can airlines and airports collaborate and might this involve peak pricing, expanded slot management or even demand management?

In terms of ATM, it is often portrayed as a short term solution. But is this the case? States own the civil/military airspace, and SES has taken over 15 years. There are long lead times for airspace changes, technology and training.

Secondly, competition has been mentioned as a way to improve ANSP performance, but is this possible? Are we not natural monopolies under government direction?

Thirdly, ANSPs have to handle the trade-offs I mentioned earlier on a daily basis. Should they have to take these decisions, or should the decisions be taken in partnership or even by someone else entirely?

Thank you very much.