Appendix D

Aberdeen Airport - Focus Group Research

October 2019

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Background: The Airspace Modernisation Programme

- the UK Government and the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) are leading a programme to modernise and redesign UK airspace, including in the skies above Aberdeen Airport,
- it is argued that airspace modernisation is needed because demand for air travel is increasing and is expected to grow steadily over the coming years, and that without modernisation the skies above the UK will become increasingly congested and flights increasingly subject to delays,
- it is hoped that the modernisation programme will:
  - help to make journeys quicker, quieter and cleaner,
  - deliver more capacity
  - provide more choice and better value for money for passengers,
  - support jobs for the local population,
  - reduce or limit environmental and noise pollution

WHAT DO PEOPLE IN ABERDEEN THINK?

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Executive Summary

- few current issues with noise (except from helicopters) but airport seen as in need of modernisation and expensive,
- little awareness of AMS but keen to see it happen, ideally in conjunction with modernisation of airport and facilities,
- local people see benefits of AMS as potentially enhancing safety, efficiency and environmental gains, discouraging journeys to other airports, reduced flight delays and wider economic benefits for Aberdeen,
- concerns about safety and security are paramount in the public's mind when considering AMS,
- they are also worried about impact on the local environment and believe that new flight paths should result in the burden of noise being shared by a large number of people less frequently rather than a small number of people more frequently,
- to maximise the success of AMS authorities need to communicate more with local people, be clear about the pros and cons and trade-offs and learn from the experience of other airports going through the process

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How the Focus Groups worked

- 3 Focus Groups
  - Dyce (near the airport) x2
  - central Aberdeen x1
  - October 2019
- Profile – spread of population according to:
  - age
  - gender
  - social class
  - frequency of using Aberdeen airport
- Agreed Discussion Guide including:
  - living near the airport/noise issues
  - awareness of modernisation programme
  - broad views of modernisation programme – pros and cons
  - priorities for design

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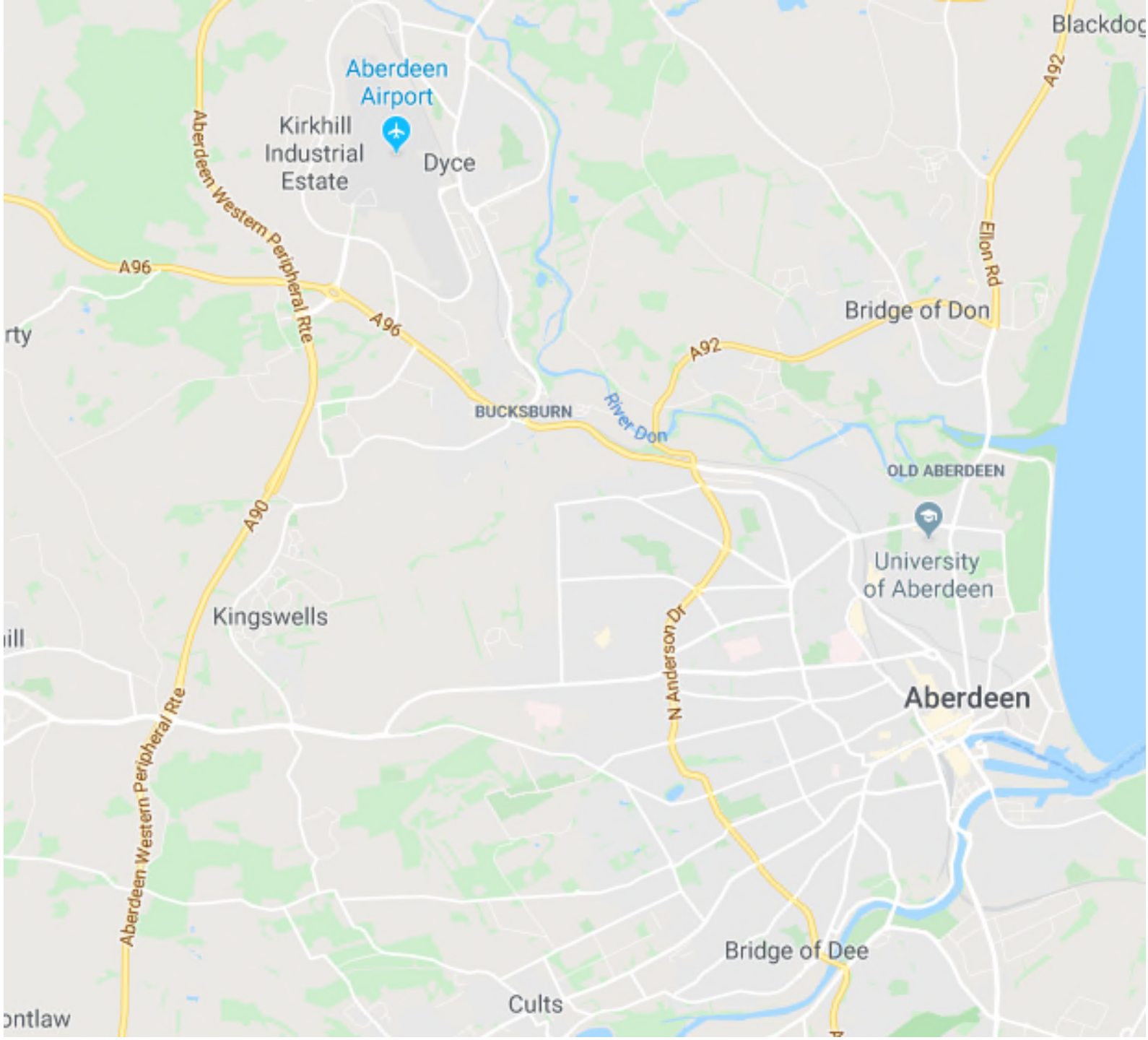
Location of Participants

- Group 1 – Dyce – participants from Dyce/immediate airport vicinity
- Group 2 – Dyce – participants from further afield
- Group 3 – Aberdeen – participants from Aberdeen city area



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Living Near Aberdeen Airport

Noise

The prevailing opinion is that noise is not an important issue and it was expected when they moved to the area. The general perception is that modern aircraft were much quieter and as a result noise pollution was lower than it had been in the past, too. Some believe that helicopters create more noise pollution locally.

Convenience

Can travel to London and get a connecting flight to a further destination if required. However, there was a concern of limited transport links with only one bus route towards the city centre.

Cost

Due to the high cost of flights and the limited number of destinations it can be more cost efficient as a consumer to travel further afield to Edinburgh or Glasgow for catching your flight; a number of people go to other airports by car/train and fly from there, which is often cheaper than flying from Aberdeen

What is the Airport like?

- seen by some as *"the forgotten airport"* – you remember experience at Glasgow and Edinburgh, a lot more than you can at the local airport,

"There is not much to do in Aberdeen airport"

- limited number of routes cause people to have to travel before their flight. Either taking an earlier flight to London or travelling to Glasgow/Edinburgh
- services/facilities seen as basic and limited, from security to baggage carousels and mobility issues,
- the building doesn't give best impression of the city to visitors or best experience to visitors as it is generally described as quite dated and cold,
- All participants feel it is necessary to update to help Aberdeen keep up with airports in other parts of the country and to increase visitor numbers

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Airspace Modernisation Strategy

"The airport could be the first thing you've ever seen of the city and if you're staying over, to catch another flight or something, you're no wanting to explore the city if you're judging it by our airport."

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What Does Airspace Modernisation Mean to You?

There was a lot of **confusion and speculation** about what AMS will mean to Aberdeen airport.

People expect modernisation to mean upgrades to *all* aspects of the airport experience, with a lot of participants sharing discontent with the airport.

Nobody had heard about any plans but were **all** keen. Most felt it is necessary to keep up with other airports.

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Perceived benefits Of Airspace Modernisation

- More efficient routes that will save fuel and reduce environmental impact. There would no longer be a need to extend a journey via another airport.
- Increased levels of safety.
- Avoidance of increasing delays for passengers as passenger numbers grow.
- Dissuade residents from travelling to other parts of the country for flights, keeping custom and income in the local area, resulting in a boost to the local economy.

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Perceived drawbacks of Airspace Modernisation

The environment was a top concern. Noise may become a problem if there are to be many more flights.

There were concerns over who would foot the bill and if the cost for modernisation would be passed back to the consumers.

Levels of disruptions to an already limited service was a concern while modernisation takes place.

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Technical Proposals

During the discussion, it was apparent that the respondents are not sure of what the more technical proposals really mean for them.

They are more focussed on their own airport experience.

They do not feel like they have enough information to give an opinion on the focus of integration with other UK airports versus local priorities.

Going forward

“Be open with folk. Tell them about the negatives, don’t just focus on the positives.”

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Main Concerns

Safety and Security

Environmental Impact

Open and honest communication

Look at what works

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Safety and Security

- all participants agree that **safety and security must be the top priority**.
- there must be consideration given to the **safety of new flight paths and upgrades to security within the airport.**
- There is some worry about **potentially disruptive actions**, such as drones and hacking, due to an increase in this occurring at other airports.

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Environmental Impact

- participants are worried about what modernisation will mean for the local environment - **convenience should not take priority over the possible impact on the environment,**
- however, potential benefits outweigh this concern with the implementation of **more efficient routes that save fuel,**
- noise pollution doesn't feel like a big problem but it is agreed noise must be managed well. **The burden should be shared so that a large number of people are affected less frequently than a smaller number of people being affected more often**.

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Conclusions

- participants are b**roadly supportive of the plans** at this level of information but would like more information when it becomes available.
- they expect **improvements to their experience** of the airport as well as the benefits of airspace modernisation.
- a boost to the local economy is also welcomed however they want to know that **changes will not negatively impact the environment**.

"well, they need to bring us in to the 21st century… they've got to start somewhere, they can't just stay standing where it is… it's progres

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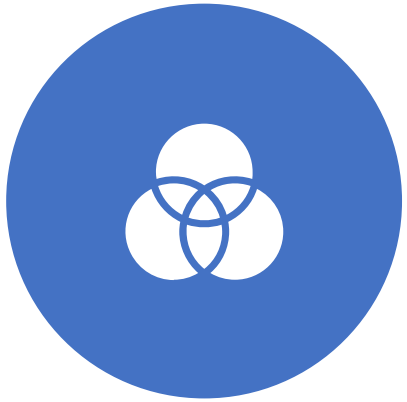
Recommendations

Open and honest communication from the authorities through engagement with the public about plans as they progress.



Authorities need to be honest about the pros, cons and trade-offs, of the plans, not just present them in the best light possible.

Learn from other airports as plans progress, especially those of similar size in other countries which are believed to have a better consumer experience.

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