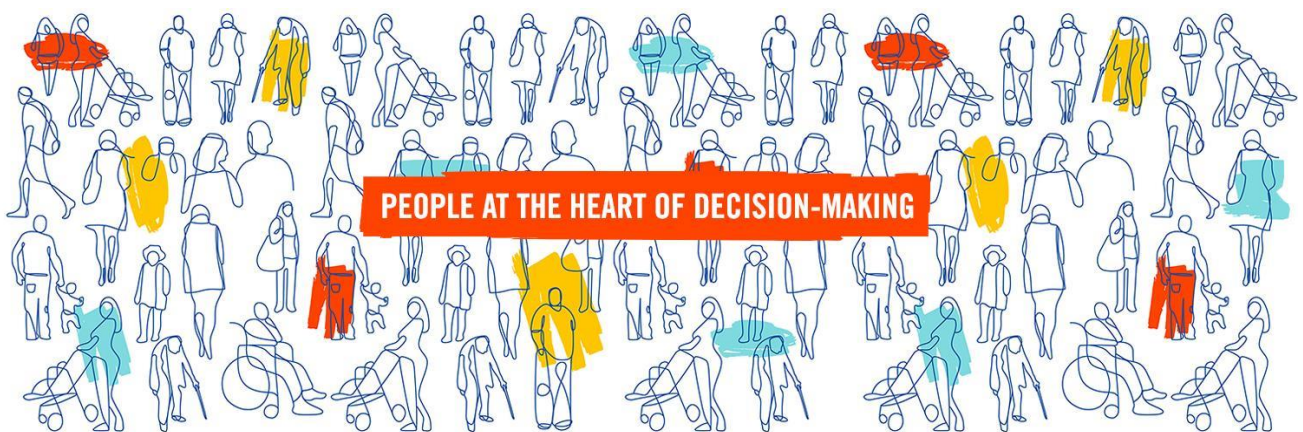




Future of Aviation

Workshop Report

December 2023



01. Introduction

Industries across the globe are reckoning with the change necessary to address the climate crisis. In the UK there is a commitment to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. The aviation sector, as an emissions-intensive industry, and its workers are at risk from poorly-planned transitions. For a smooth and just transition, it has never been more important to centre the voices of those who will carry out that change at all levels across the sector. Transforming the aviation industry requires collaboration with a range of stakeholders, with workers at the core. Citizens' assemblies and citizens' juries, have a history of enabling better informed, more inclusive and future-proof decision making. They enable ordinary citizens to engage with complex and polarising issues such as [abortion in Ireland](#) and [assisted dying in Jersey](#) and reach considered, practical decisions that reflect the diversity of values, views and experiences present.

Building on the citizens' assembly model, in November 2023 [Involve](#) and [Safe Landing](#) delivered the first deliberative workshop on the future of sustainable aviation, at the Aerospace Museum in Bristol. The process was designed in collaboration with an Advisory Group, made up of experts in the aviation industry, who oversaw the recruitment, process design, and speaker selection, ensuring the independence of the workshop and that the information presented was balanced. The Advisory group included representatives from Royal Aeronautical Society, Manchester University, Bristol University and those working in aviation.

This short report provides the highlights of the process, findings, reflections and our ideas for where to go next. You can also find a more detailed analysis of the workshop in the [appendices](#).

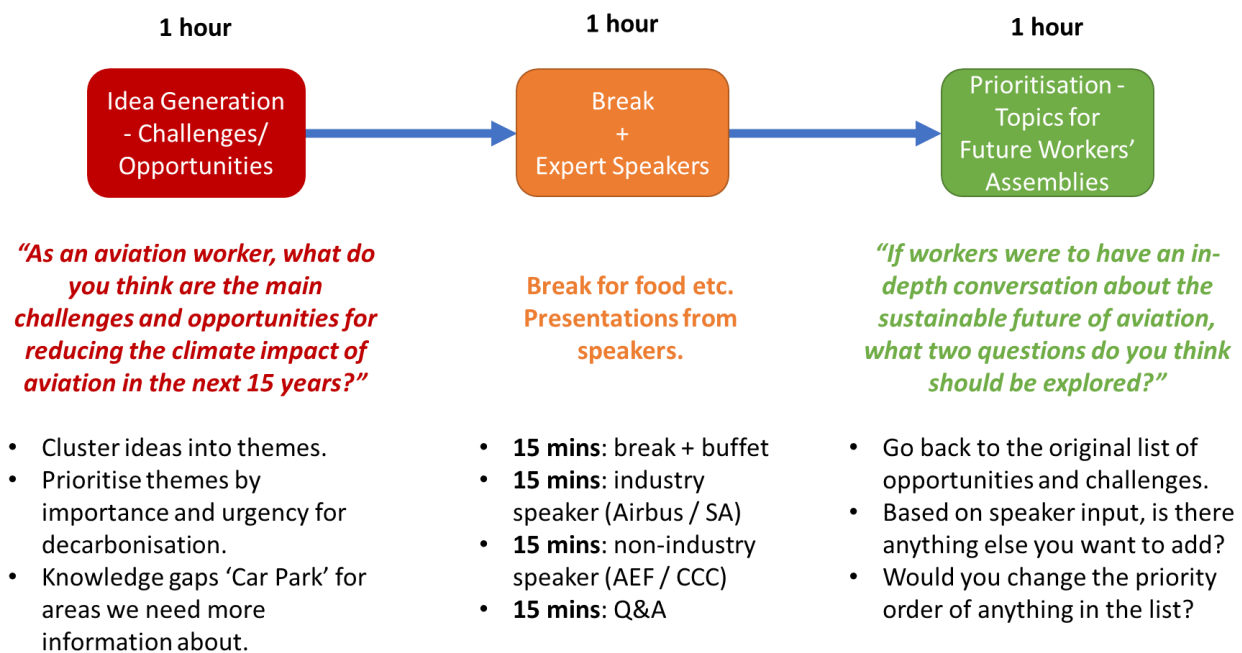


02. The Process

A diverse group of 31 Bristol-based workers and students in the aviation industry were selected (**see appendices**) to participate in the 3-hour workshop. Participants were arranged into groups around four tables. Each table was supported by an independent facilitator from Involve, ensuring everyone had an opportunity for their voice to be heard.

The Process: An Overview

Aviation Workers’ “The Future of Aviation” 3h Workshop in Bristol



The session started with participants exploring the question:

‘As an aviation worker, what do you think are the main challenges and opportunities for reducing the climate impact of aviation in the next 15 years?’

Using their knowledge, expertise and experience of working or studying in the aviation industry, participants discussed this question at their tables. When discussing their answers, they were encouraged to think about how urgent each opportunity/challenge is for aviation workers and for industry decarbonisation.

After a short break, participants heard from three speakers that reflected a diversity of perspectives on the future of sustainable aviation:

- Solange Baena from Airbus and [Sustainable Aviation](#) presented an industry-perspective of aviation’s Decarbonisation Roadmap, speaking to the potential for technical advances and innovation to provide a pathway to a decarbonised future. Solange discussed some of the challenges for technical innovation and emphasised the opportunity for the growth of new industries and technologies, providing new jobs across the aviation industry.

- Tim Johnson from [Aviation Environment Federation](#) spoke to the challenges of an innovation-oriented approach to decarbonisation and emphasised the need for legislative and regulatory change to limit the expansion of the aviation industry and encourage behaviour change in the population.
- Rose Armitage from [the Climate Change Committee](#) spoke from a national perspective on cross-economy considerations for decarbonising aviation, alongside other industries, and providing CCC's analysis on the relative benefits/risks of different decarbonisation pathways.

After the presentations there was a short Q&A session with speakers. The speakers were also available for the rest of the session to answer questions at tables.

For the final exercise, at their small tables, participants discussed the question:

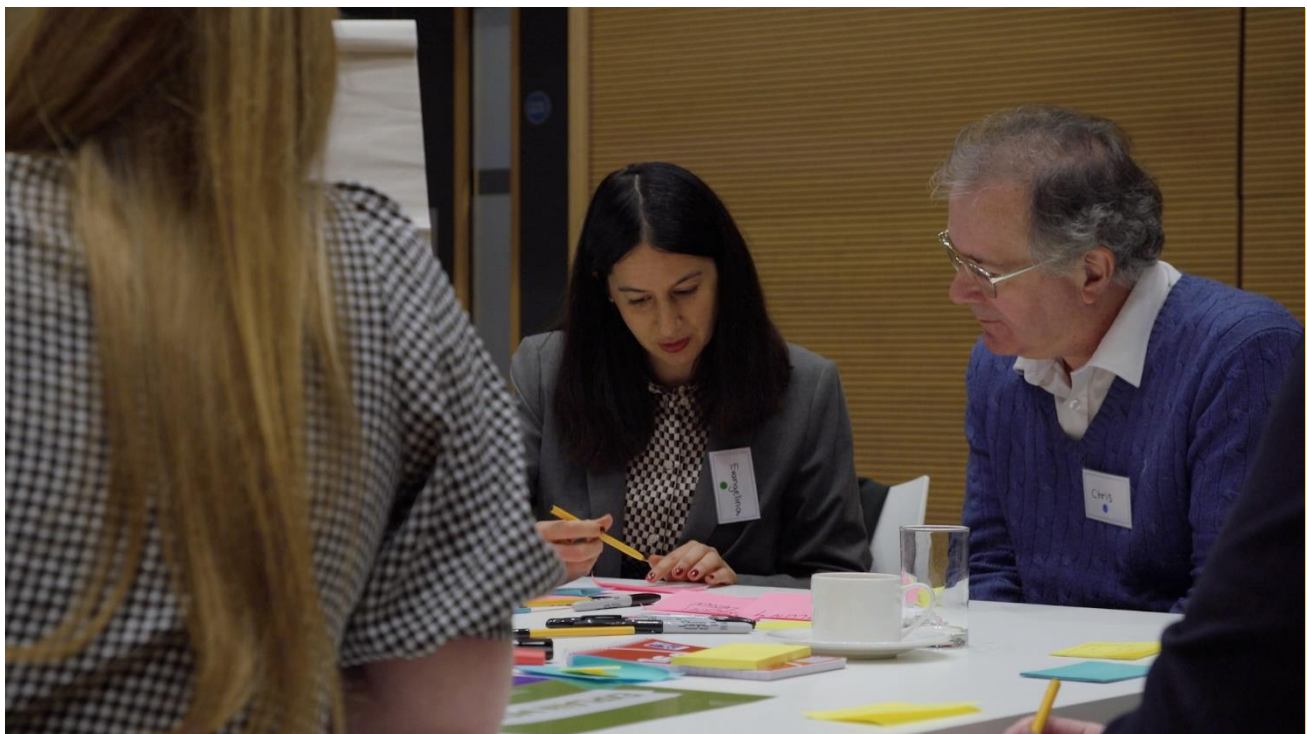
'If workers were to have an in-depth conversation about the sustainable future of aviation, what two questions do you think should be explored?'

They were encouraged to consider the first conversation on challenges and opportunities, the information from speakers, and their own knowledge and experience as part of this discussion. By the end of the session the participants had identified eight questions they would like to see explored by the industry in a future deliberative process on sustainable aviation. These eight questions were read aloud in plenary, with other tables having an opportunity to reflect if their ideas were similar or different across groups.



03. Key Findings

Opportunities and challenges for the future of sustainable aviation		
Development of low-carbon technological innovations e.g. SAF, carbon capture, larger batteries, wing structure	Cost of innovation, updating infrastructure and implementation of new technologies	Government regulation and intervention in the future direction of the aviation industry
Safety of new technologies	Availability and timeliness of necessary infrastructure for technological developments	Public attitudes and behaviour change towards flying and impact on demand
Risk of job loss as public behaviour changes and new skills are needed for low-carbon aircraft	Opportunity for new jobs in emerging low-carbon technologies	Timeframe for developing low carbon solutions at the necessary scale



Questions for a further deliberative process on the future of sustainable aviation

To what extent do our solutions consider the constraints, compromises and aspects of aviation as well as the impact on stakeholders?

What should be targeted areas of focus of investment (design, manufacturing, R&D) and the role of collaboration in progression forward?

Is it possible to meet climate targets without demand reduction and, if not, how would this be achieved equitably?

How do I know which decarbonisation-themed activities to prioritise?

What would drive aviation workers to commit to change?

Should companies share technologies within the industry to further sustainability?

How confident are we that new tech (like SAF, hydrogen) can meet demand?

What practical steps can aviation workers take in order to decarbonise?

04. Reflections and conclusions

This workshop was designed to explore the potential for worker engagement in the challenges of climate change for aviation. The result was encouraging - participants were able to learn and deliver good outputs in a limited time. 94% of participants said they would attend a similar workshop on sustainable aviation in the future and were supportive of the need for this sort of engagement in aviation. This initial conversation demonstrated the enthusiasm for and potential of centring workers' voices in the big decisions around decarbonising the aviation industry.

Messages to industry leaders from participants

"Big decisions need to be made if we are to avoid climate breakdown, and the longer these are postponed the bigger they have to be"

"Involve employees in big decisions"

"Our future will be determined by how we are perceived by the public. We need to manage this so that our efforts are understood"

"Quicker, more uncomfortable changes in aviation might be necessary in order to gain the results we require to prevent climate change"

"It [the workshop] was great, please do more"

Messages to workers

"It was very worthwhile and a rare opportunity to make our collective opinion known"

"Open your mind and heart to another perspective"

"Really a safe place to share our opinions and feelings about the climate change crisis, good ideas discussed"

"Keep your enthusiasm and passion and your future will be good"

"Consider participating in the future"

05. What happens next

Involve is committed to ensuring the voices of those most affected by decisions are involved in the decision-making process. Industries in transition are hotspots where the changes required will have long lasting effects on the workers involved and the wider world. For a just transition, it is imperative that workers are engaged in a meaningful way. This workshop was designed to be catalytic and inform future processes. It showed that there is an appetite for this sort of deliberative process amongst workers and students. At the same time, it highlighted the need for deeper, more sustained engagement to really explore the different perspectives, come to conclusions and to be directly connected to the questions being asked of the aviation sector and the decisions being made.

To do that would require a fuller multi-day process commissioned by decision makers within the industry, trade unions, regulators or government. This is an opportunity to use the established process of a citizen assembly to accelerate progress towards sustainable aviation that works for workers.

Based on the learning from this process, and Involve's experience in participatory processes, we recommend the development of workers' assemblies on the transition. A workers' assembly would bring a demographically reflective sample of aviation workers from numerous organisations across the sector together for a multi-day deliberative process. The assembly would follow the well-established [citizens' assembly model](#); participants would have the time and opportunity to learn about and discuss a topic, hearing from a balanced range of specialists, before deliberating on what they've heard and building consensus to establish a set of recommendations.

How do we get there?

To get there we have three recommendations:

- For aviation leaders to commission a deliberative process in their companies, or collaborate across their industry to centre worker voices in the industry transition to drive better decisions based on people's needs and wants;
- For trade unions to work with environmental, civil society, economic and industry groups to use deliberative processes to support a just transition and find a way forward on the potential synergies between jobs and decarbonisation. That would mean advocating for and/or commissioning a workers' assembly for aviation;
- For the government to use such a process to develop worker-led industrial strategies.

We want to collaborate with industry leaders, trade unions and climate groups to deliver this sort of deliberation at a larger scale and ensure aviation workers have a seat at the table when decarbonising aviation. We also recognise the importance of public deliberation in developing industrial strategies across the hard-to-abate industries and look to current and future governments to commit to making this happen.

Would you like to collaborate?

We can't make this happen alone. If you would like to learn more about the transformative potential of involving workers in decisions about the future of aviation or be involved in bringing this to life, please get in touch with **Safe Landing: info@safe-landing.org**