



Safe Landing

‘CREATING THE FUTURE OF AVIATION’ VISIONING ASSEMBLY OUTPUT REPORT



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Executive Summary

In the United Kingdom, aviation accounts for 7% of total greenhouse gas emissions and is projected to become the country's largest emitting sector by 2040. Short-term priorities and established decision-making practices are making it harder for the aviation industry to move quickly on decarbonisation. Developing a clear, worker-led vision for the future of flight would help unlock the next stage of progress.

The Visioning Assembly presented in this report was delivered through our Workers' Participation area, which develops and scales Workers' Assemblies – industrial democratic models, based on proven Citizens' Assembly frameworks. This report summarises the outcomes of Safe Landing's Visioning Assembly, which sought to enable aviation workers to co-create a positive, worker-led vision for the future of aviation. Our long-term objective is to demonstrate how these processes, when applied at a larger scale, can directly support aviation strategic planning and positively influence both industrial and environmental policymaking.

Supported by MutualGain – for process design and lead facilitation – and funded by Patagonia, Safe Landing convened the Visioning Assembly in London on Saturday 13 September 2025. Twenty-six aviation workers from a broad range of roles, ages, and ethnicities were selected from over 80 applicants. Participants were guided through structured deliberative exercises to co-create a shared vision for the future of aviation in 2050. This vision addressed five key areas of change: social responsibility, financial support, technical developments, political strategy, and environmental stewardship.

Key Findings

The following insights illustrate the outcomes of the Visioning Assembly and the priorities identified by aviation workers for a sustainable future.

- Participants envisioned a future in 2050 where sustainability is integrated into every part of the industry ecosystem.
- They saw an industry that **successfully funded new technologies through fair taxation on frequent flyers**.
- They imagined **airports working in harmony with local communities** to maintain clean air and integrate low-carbon flight into a wider low-carbon multi-modal transport system.
- They desired that **workers' and citizens' voices had been at the forefront of these decisions** via dialogue and deliberation.
- Many of these visions **challenged the existing narratives around industry growth** and demand management. The discussions suggested that **grassroots workers want more from industry leaders and governments** to ensure the aviation industry is fit for the future and exists in balance with nature. It has further evidenced that when grassroots workers are given a voice they **can produce a vision for the future that benefits workers, communities and the environment**.
- Participants valued the chance to **discuss difficult trade-offs** in an open and balanced way. The deliberation encouraged them to think **beyond their own position** and reflect on how decisions affect others across the industry. Many expressed **enthusiasm for future assemblies** on challenging issues such as demand management, a frequent flyer levy, and national ownership.

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Background - Aviation's impact on the climate

In the United Kingdom, aviation accounts for 7% of total greenhouse gas emissions and is projected to increase to 11% in 2030¹. It is on track to become the largest emitting sector before 2040². The UK government has set out a pathway for the industry to reach net zero emissions by 2050 namely the 'Jet Zero strategy'³. This, however, has been widely criticised as inadequate⁴. The industry also has a poor track record when it comes to meeting its own emissions reduction and efficiency targets⁵.

The UK government is continuing to expand every major airport⁶, a decision that has been supported by trade unions⁷, against the advice of the government's own advisors, the Climate Change Committee⁸. Despite the scientific advice, the general principle followed by both the government and trade unions is that conventional airport and industry expansion is how the industry continues to prosper, create jobs and protect livelihoods.

Against this backdrop, there is a growing recognition that the future of aviation cannot be shaped by any single perspective. A collective conversation is needed: one that brings together the ambition for economic success, the pride and passion of the workforce, and the responsibility to protect communities and the environment. Creating the conditions for these different visions to meet is essential if the industry is to build a thriving, fair, and sustainable future.

1 Aviation and climate change - House of Commons Library - <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8826/>

2 Aviation likely to be the UK's leading emitter by 2040, forecasts Climate Change Committee - <https://www.greenairnews.com/?p=6899>

3 Jet Zero Strategy - <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62e931d48fa8f5033896888a/jet-zero-strategy.pdf>

4 AEF Responds to Government's 'Jet Zero' Strategy - <https://www.aef.org.uk/2022/08/15/aef-responds-to-governments-jet-zero-strategy/>

5 Missed Targets: A brief history of aviation climate targets. — Possible - <https://www.wearepossible.org/our-reports/missed-target-a-brief-history-of-aviation-climate-targets>

6 Gatwick second runway: Can the UK expand airports and still hit climate targets? - BBC News - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cx2jpn88lw0o>

7 Heathrow expansion plans need firm commitment from government says Unite - <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2025/august/heathrow-expansion-plans-need-firm-commitment-from-government-says-unite>

8 The Seventh Carbon Budget - Climate Change Committee - <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/the-seventh-carbon-budget/>

Who is Safe Landing?

Safe Landing is a community of aviation workers and enthusiasts who want to live in a world where aviation flourishes in harmony with nature, and the beauty of flying can be enjoyed by all for generations to come. We bring together a global community of aviation workers and enthusiasts, by providing platforms that harness our expertise to create and champion sustainable visions of the future of air travel, for the benefit of all.

Workers' Participation

One of our core areas is Workers' Participation. Within that we pioneer and advocate for governments, trade unions and other workers' groups to implement Workers' Assemblies that give workers a voice to recommend how their industry transforms in the coming years to tackle climate change. Workers' Assemblies are based on highly successful Citizens' Assembly models, a form of deliberative and participatory democracy that has been used all over the world to address the most pressing issues of our times that conventional politics has failed to grapple with e.g. climate change, social care and abortion rights in Ireland.

Differently to Citizens' Assemblies, which select assembly participants by sortition (a form of civic lottery) from the general population, Workers' Assembly participants are selected by sortition from a particular industrial sector or trade union. Similarly to a Citizens' Assembly, assembly participants would be posed a question to address, presented with evidence from a wide range of experts and stakeholders, provided facilitated time and space to deliberate and then produce and vote on recommendations.

Enhancing existing democratic processes

Safe Landing recognises that rising aviation emissions and ongoing support for conventional industry growth are influenced in part by the short time horizons built into many current decision-making processes, both in government and in trade union structures. While trade unions have a strong record of safeguarding workers' rights and conditions, the existing formats for participation – such as brief branch meetings or conference motions – can make it challenging to explore complex industry questions or to bring in a wide range of perspectives.

We see Workers' Assemblies as a way to complement and strengthen existing democratic processes by giving workers more time, space, and support to engage with long-term strategic issues. As the aviation sector moves toward decarbonisation, workers will be among the most affected by the pace and direction of change. Creating opportunities for deeper participation can help ensure that future industrial policies developed by government and trade unions are informed, resilient, and aligned with workers' long-term interests.

Advocacy

Since our founding in 2020, Safe Landing has been advocating for Workers' Assemblies as a way to give aviation professionals a meaningful voice in shaping the future of their industry. This advocacy has already seen tangible impact: for example, the British Airline Pilots Association (BALPA) committed to holding a Climate Forum, a form of assembly, in 2022, and we are engaged in ongoing discussions with other unions internationally. To complement our advocacy and build wider awareness, we also run our own Workers' Assemblies, creating opportunities for grassroots engagement and helping to embed participatory, democratic practices across the industry.

The rationale behind the Visioning Assembly

In 2023, Safe Landing ran our first deliberative workshop⁹ with Involve¹⁰ in Bristol for aerospace engineers and students. It was highly successful, with most participants stating that they would partake in another assembly. One of the observations post-assembly was that the industry was missing a positive, worker-led vision for the future of aviation. We have observed two dominant perspectives on the future of aviation

Firstly, that of industry leaders who generally lobby the government to avoid increased taxation on flying, to continue airport expansion, relying on future low-carbon technology and carbon offsets and removal. This is widely criticised as high risk and not credible by climate scientists and NGOs¹¹.

The second vision is that of climate campaigners, which sees flying as highly polluting and damaging to the climate. They campaign for a rapid reduction in flights, often via increased restrictions on air traffic and taxation of flying with the jobs of those in the industry sometimes seen as a secondary concern. In our experience this is seen as relatively negative and threatening by aviation workers.

As a result of this observation, for our second assembly we wanted to create a positive, worker-led vision for what the aviation industry could look like in 2050. A future that is both congruent with climate science but also beneficial for workers.



9 Safe Landing “Future of Aviation” Workshop in Bristol - <https://safe-landing.org/bristol-workshop>

10 Involve - <https://www.involve.org.uk/>

11 <https://www.aef.org.uk/2022/08/15/aef-responds-to-governments-jet-zero-strategy/>

Assembly Logistics

Funding

The Visioning Assembly was funded by a \$15,000 (approximately £12,000) grant from Patagonia¹² from their '1% for the planet' fund.

Date and location

Saturday 13th September 2025 at the Friends House, Euston, London from 10:00 - 16:00.

Facilitators

The Lead Facilitator was Susan Ritchie of MutualGain¹³. Table facilitators were members of the Safe Landing Core Team. Finlay Asher of Safe Landing and Theo Jennings of MutualGain supported the facilitators and carried out real-time analysis of table discussions.

Recording

Table discussions were recorded using an Artificial Intelligence platform called 'DeliberAlde'¹⁴. Omer Bilgin, DeliberAlde's co-founder, provided support for the platform on the day.

Observers

Observing the Visioning Assembly was Elke Weber of Princeton University and Katharina Götting of Technische Universität Berlin. They co-designed a post-assembly survey to analyse the impact of participation in the Visioning Assembly.

Photographer and artist

Ben Wright of Ethical Creatives¹⁵ recorded interviews with 3 participants throughout the day and took photographs. Mair Perkins¹⁶ was commissioned to draw sketches of interactions between participants during the exercises and to produce a visualisation of the final vision statements produced.

Exercise design team

The Visioning Assembly exercises were co-designed between Safe Landing and Susan Ritchie of MutualGain¹⁷, an organisation that designs participatory processes which build trust, confidence and connection, helping people work better together.

¹² Patagonia UK - <https://eu.patagonia.com/gb/en/home/>

¹³ MutualGain - <https://www.mutualgain.org/>

¹⁴ Deliberaide - <https://www.deliberaide.com/>

¹⁵ Ethical Creatives - <https://www.ethicalcreatives.co.uk/>

¹⁶ Mair Perkins Ltd. - <https://mairperkins.co.uk/>

¹⁷ MutualGain - <https://www.mutualgain.org/>

Participants

Selection

The Visioning Assembly was widely advertised on our social media platforms and 85 people filled in our application form on the Safe Landing website. 26 people were selected as participants to represent a diversity in job role, gender, ethnicity, age and views on climate change.

Incentive

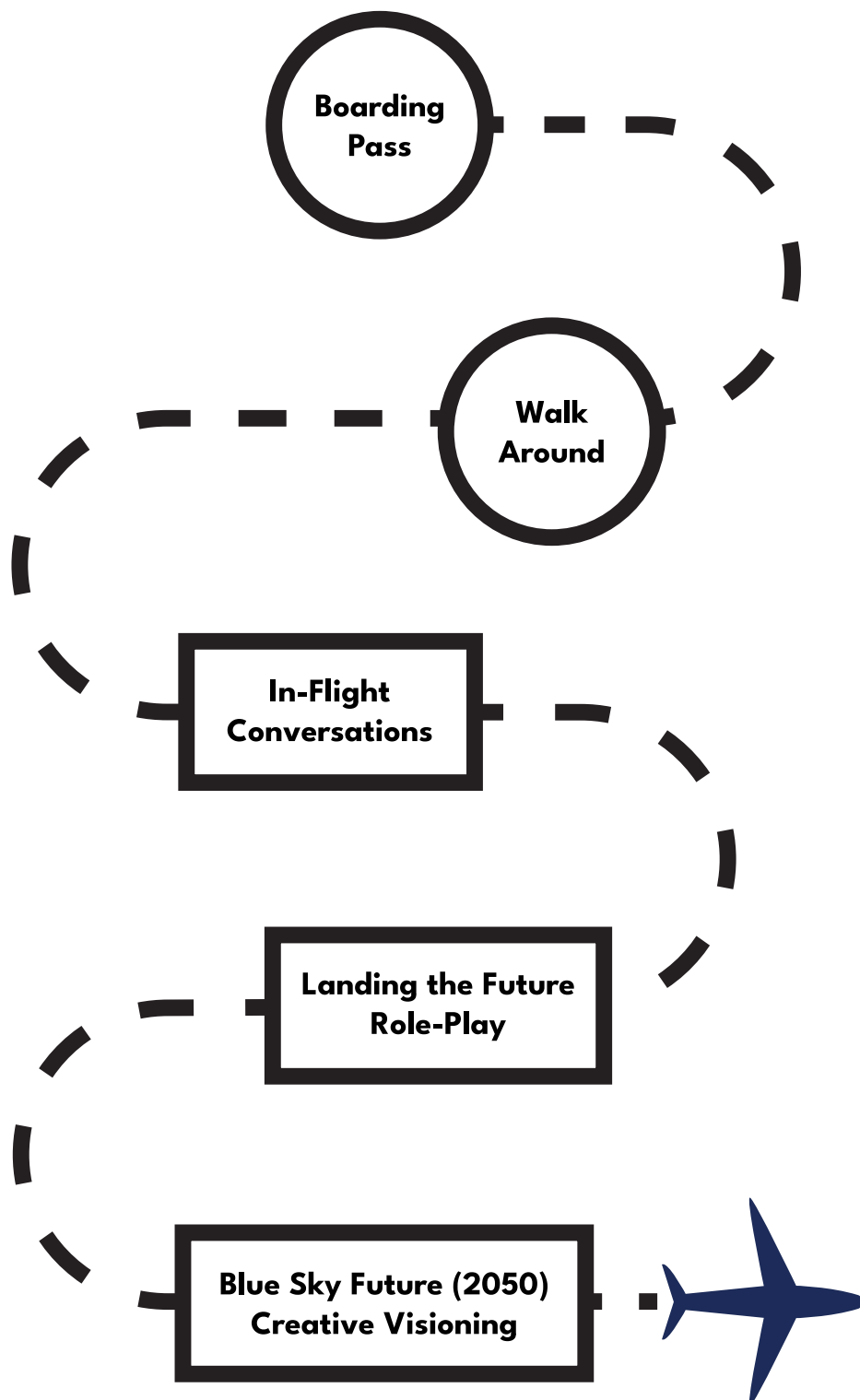
In an attempt to make the assembly inclusive, participants were offered a £30 payment and full travel reimbursement. These measures helped remove financial barriers to participation and signalled that every attendee's time, experience, and perspective were valued equally, which is an important element of assemblies.



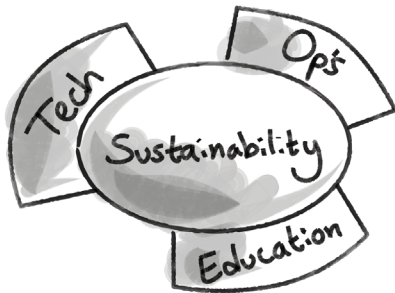
Exercises

The Visioning Assembly was composed of two warm-up exercises (Boarding pass and the 'Walk round') followed by three main exercises:

1. "In-Flight Conversations"
2. "Landing the Future" role play
3. "Blue Sky Future (2050)" creative visioning



The Vision: Social Responsibility



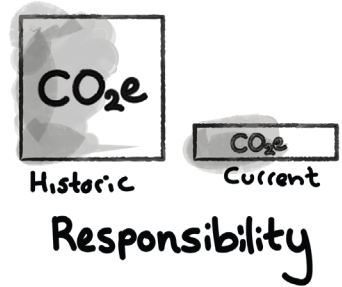
Genuine sustainability is integrated into every aspect of aviation, including technology, operations, and education, rather than being an add-on.



The industry is no longer involved in any unethical defence contracts. Workers' have increased wellbeing and are proud of their roles in shaping its evolution.



Travel is more mindful. Holidays are reimagined, where many people take 'staycations' and travel abroad is more meaningful.



The industry has taken responsibility for past and present emissions and ensures community health around airports.



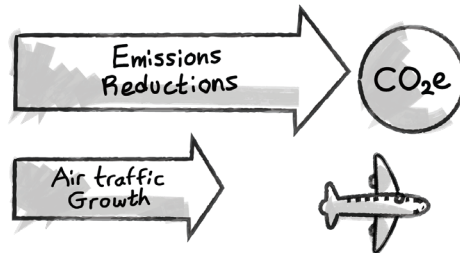
Access to air travel is fair, bridging the gap between the global North and South.

Social responsibility

PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FROM PARTICIPANTS

100%

The Vision: Financial

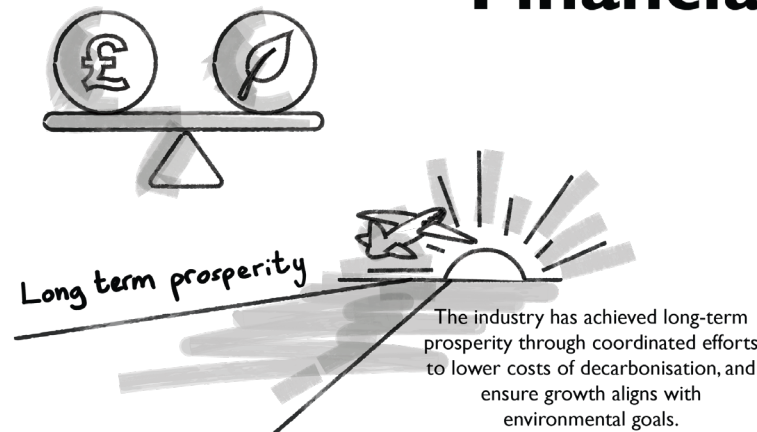


Profit may remain a key economic measure but air traffic growth has not outpaced reductions in emissions, avoiding Jevons Paradox.



Higher quality jobs and market opportunities have been created, with government and industry investment accelerating sustainable technology development.

Industry growth is responsible and sustainable, balancing economic expansion with environmental impact.



The industry has achieved long-term prosperity through coordinated efforts to lower costs of decarbonisation, and ensure growth aligns with environmental goals.

Financial

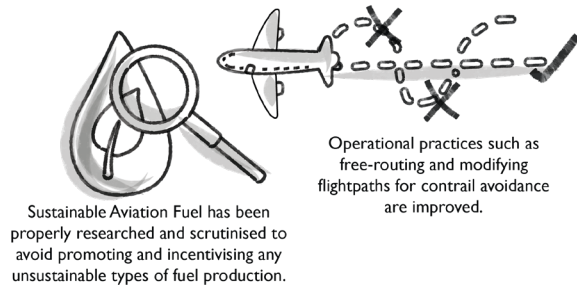
Government investment has been funded fairly and equitably by taxing wealth and/or implementing progressive aviation tax policies e.g. carbon pricing or a frequent flyer levy.



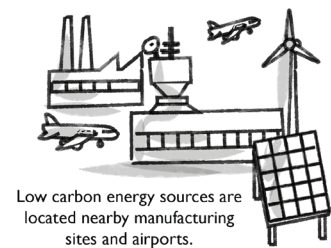
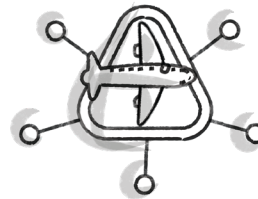
PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FROM PARTICIPANTS

90%

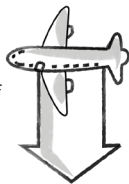
The Vision: Technical



An aircraft's entire lifecycle is now considered with better reuse and recycling of materials.



Short-term demand management was utilised if technical solutions did not progress fast enough.



Aircraft are flown with maximum passenger capacity as much as possible.

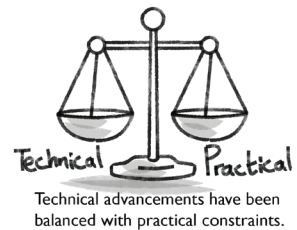
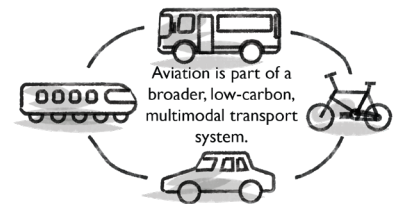


Aircraft push backs and taxi have been electrified.

Technical



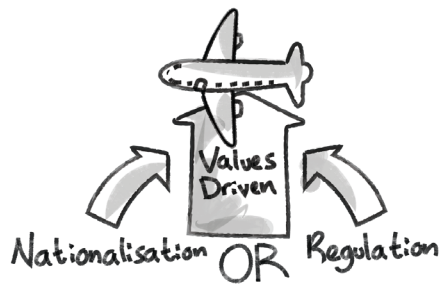
Regulatory support and creative collaboration has led to aircraft being radically re-designed for greater efficiency and reduced environmental impact, integrating new energy sources like hydrogen and hybrid power systems.



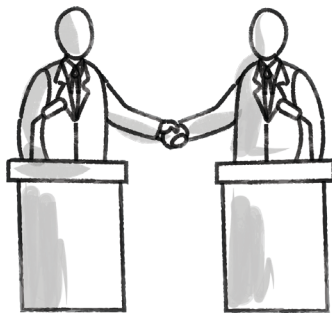
PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FROM PARTICIPANTS

94%

The Vision: Political



Whether through nationalisation or improved regulation of private companies, aviation is now values-driven.



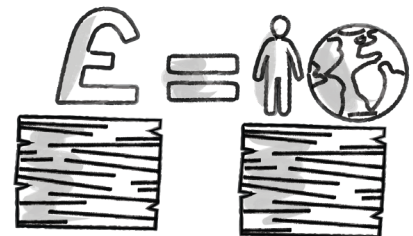
Politics in aviation has a focus on sustainability, representation, and proactive policy-making. Sustainability is a central, non-partisan issue and governments lead rather than react to industry needs, driving international collaboration.

Political



Improved stakeholder consultation is now the norm. Communities surrounding airports are properly integrated into airports' decision-making.

There is fair and equitable representation across age, gender, ethnicity, and social class in decision-making, through mechanisms like citizens' assemblies to enable long-term planning and investment.



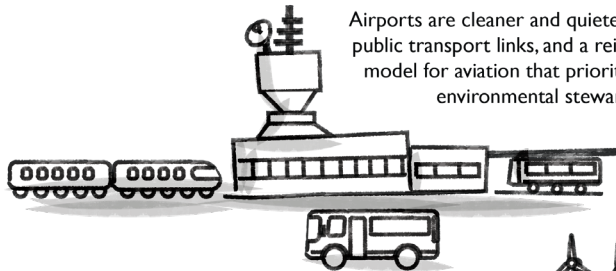
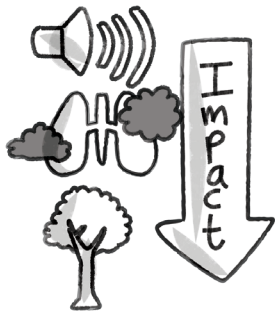
Policies balance profitability with public and environmental benefit.

PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FROM PARTICIPANTS

94%

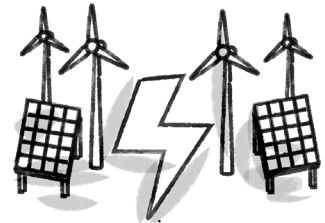
The Vision: Environmental

Environmental impacts such as noise, air pollution, and damage to biodiversity have been minimised.

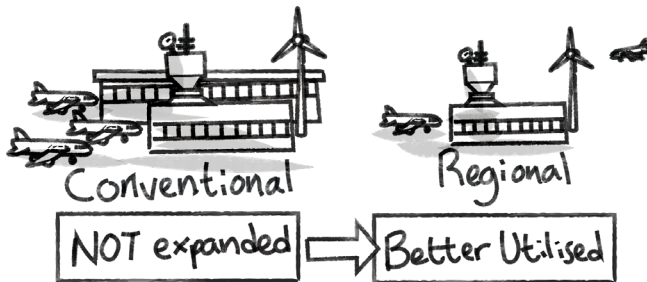


Airports are cleaner and quieter, with improved public transport links, and a reimagined growth model for aviation that prioritizes long-term environmental stewardship.

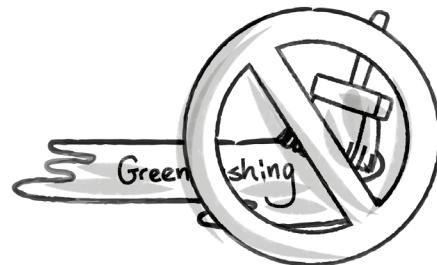
Environmental



Renewable energy has been expanded, and aviation has ensured that it does not divert clean energy from other sectors.



Conventional airports have not been expanded and regional airports are better utilised.



Greenwashing has been eliminated.

PERCENTAGE SUPPORT FROM PARTICIPANTS

74%

Conclusions and Recommendations

The aim of the Visioning Assembly was for aviation workers to co-create a positive, worker-led vision for the future of aviation. Participants envisioned a future in 2050 where sustainability is integrated into every part of the industry ecosystem. They saw an industry that successfully funded new technologies through fair taxation on frequent flyers. They saw airports working in harmony with local communities to maintain clean air and integrate low carbon flight into a wider low-carbon multi-modal transport system. They saw that workers' and citizens' voices had been at the forefront of these decisions via mechanisms like Citizens' Assemblies.

Many of the aspects of these visions challenge the existing narratives around conventional industry growth and demand management. The assembly has proven that grassroots workers want more from industry leaders and governments to ensure the aviation industry is fit for the future and eventually operates in harmony with nature. It has further proven that when grassroots workers are given a voice that they can produce a vision for the future that benefits workers, communities and the environment.

Beyond the vision itself, participants reacted very positively to the Visioning Assembly process. Here are some of the testimonials written by participants after the assembly:

“Thanks for organising this! It’s great to meet so many people working to make our sector better!”

- Participant testimonial

“Great to meet so many different but like-minded people. Inspired me to be more active!”

- Participant testimonial

It was clear that there is clearly an existing power imbalance between workers in roles such as a pilot and those in roles such as cabin crew. It was noted that cabin crew often feel that they have less of a voice in how the industry is governed and that they are sidelined. This imbalance is something Workers' Assemblies seek to address and minimise by giving all participants, no matter their job role, an equal voice.

During the group exercises it was noted that there was high demand for further assemblies, particularly on sticky issues like demand management, a frequent flyer levy, and nationalisation. There was also high demand for figuring out the pathway to get to these visions, for example: where does workers' power lie and what are the barriers getting in the way of progress?

**For more information on the Visioning Assembly
and Safe Landing's work,
please email info@safe-landing.org**