

Executive summary

The Bournemouth Air Festival Symposium of 4th June 2010 addressed whether it is right to have an Air Festival in Bournemouth. The key questions discussed included how future Air Festivals should be managed and how having Air Festivals conflicts with Bournemouth's aspirations for a greener economy and way of life. The Air Festival is seen by many as a big, exciting social event with significant benefits. The purpose of the Symposium was to enable key stakeholders to explore the future sustainability of the festival and to discuss associated issues and potential opportunities.

The Council's top priority is "Improving our Environment". It is placing a lot of emphasis on Sustainable Development - which is about balancing socio-economic and environmental issues and the community plays a key role in this. Tourism is key to Bournemouth's future, and there are key challenges to tourism in terms of future resilience and sustainable travel. The carbon impact of the Air Festival is small compared to the overall impact from the transport emissions of the visitors. However other environmental impacts need to be considered - particularly the issue of waste management along the seafront. Some rigorous processes are needed to make the Air Festival and other events more sustainable, whilst still providing an event which is attractive to tourists and a source of social wellbeing.

Feedback on the Air Festival from the local community and the Council has been positive regarding raising the profile of the town. Research shows that air shows in western countries are actually building in interest annually. The Air Festival is still seen as a strong competitive product with a real ability to appeal to the customer, and achieves the tourism objective of showcasing Bournemouth as a top UK resort. It would have a unique selling point if it aimed to be green.

The Council needs to look more seriously at Sustainable Development issues having signed-up to the Earth Charter's principles, take leadership and make decisions based on facts and data. Targets set by the Climate Change Act are

challenging: an 80% reduction of carbon emissions by 2050. Tough criteria are required which are consistent with the UK target for the carbon footprint. Bournemouth needs to be progressive with this target that must be met and it is important for the town to resolve how it maintains the credibility of its green credentials. Better decisions using the Earth Charter as a framework will resolve the tensions around the different aspects of sustainability. The local authority can also have a big impact in other ways such as by setting examples and social marketing to encourage and engage people in different modes of behaviour. Before organising an event it is important to be able to show the public that the event is low impact. Before organising the event, it is important to be able to show the public that the event is continually seeking to lower its carbon impact.

It is important to develop plans to showcase Bournemouth as having a low carbon economy. Quality data is needed to inform decisions for balancing socio-economic and environmental issues for a sustainable Tourist industry and common ground needs to be found to minimise associated environmental impacts. In the short-term it is important to reduce the impact of the Air Festival, and to consider alternatives in the medium to long term which are financially and more environmentally sustainable.

A firm calculation of the footprint of the Air Festival is needed and the goal should be to seek to reduce that footprint. More data is also needed to identify environmental costs. The quality of data is important and needs to be enhanced. Targets need to be set to decrease emissions related to travel, and travel congestion; waste and fossil fuel dependency over time and a waste management plan needs to be developed. Coherence needs to be assured in decision-making process between partnerships, tourism etc. ensuring that all stake-holder groups are included. New, innovative and more sustainable ways are needed to attract people to the area without overtaxing our infrastructure.

In conclusion, the Council's commitment to Sustainable Development and the Earth Charter is a gradual and evolving process. Key measures, which need to be taken forward in relation to this include:

- An evidence based Action Plan to ensure the greenest Air Festival;

- A green travel plan to help residents and visitors travel to and around the area in the most sustainable way;
- A waste management plan to help reduce the amount of waste of residents and visitors;
- Sourcing of additional funds to support a local and community-led project which contributes to minimising the environmental impact of the event;
- Ensuring that the key messages to festival goers enhance green awareness;
- Use the festival as an opportunity to educate residents about environmental issues and the improvement made;
- Inviting a representative from the Bournemouth 2026 Sustainable Environment Forum onto the Bournemouth Tourism Management Board;
- Look to the council for continued leadership in the areas of tackling climate change, carbon reduction and sustainable development.