

General Briefing, Summer 2024

BACKGROUND

- The Government established the Airports Commission in 2012 to review hub airport capacity in the United Kingdom. In 2015, the Commission recommended a third runway at Heathrow.
- In 2018, the Government published the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) on Heathrow expansion, which still stands today. Much of the evidence that was part of the decision to support a third runway at Heathrow is now extremely out of date.
- In 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that the Government acted lawfully is not taking into account legally binding climate targets on the basis that they were not law when the ANPS was voted on. They would have to be considered at the next stage of the process.

REASONS TO OPPOSE HEATHROW EXPANSION

ECONOMIC COSTS

- The Government's own analysis found that once all negative impacts are monetised, a third runway could deliver net **NEGATIVE** economic costs totalling £2.2bn to the UK.
- There is no explicit job model and no clear job creation analysis included in the Airports National Policy Statement. Many of the few jobs created will be low-skilled and short term.
- The costs of the project are now expected to rise to over £31bn, increasing Heathrow's debt from £15.6bn (2022) to over £40bn in 2028. This could still increase further.
- Heathrow's ability to finance a 3rd runway remains highly questionable. Their majority shareholder Ferrovial have sold their 25% holding, reflecting their concerns that the project will ever be delivered.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Heathrow is already the biggest single source of carbon emissions in the UK and expansion will add an extra 8-9 megatonnes of CO₂ per year.
- The Government has accepted the Climate Change Committee's advice to include international aviation emissions in the 6th Carbon Budget. Heathrow's expansion plans were based on the exclusion of those emission in order to be compliant with UK climate law.
- The CCC balanced pathway to Net Zero anticipates that aviation will still be emitting 23 megatonnes of CO₂ by 2050. A third runway at Heathrow would increase the airport's emissions to 27 megatonnes of CO₂.
- Consequently, growth would need to be curbed at all other UK airports if a third runway is built in order for the UK not to breach its carbon targets.
- The carbon abatement cost of Heathrow expansion has now doubled to £100bn.

TRANSPORT IMPACTS

- Expansion would result in a total of 175,000 additional daily trips on local transport networks.

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- Heathrow has to increase the proportion of passengers accessing the airport by public transport from 40% today to 50% in 2030 and 55% in 2040. However, it has only increased this figure by 1% since 2009.
- It is unclear what the cost to the taxpayer of the road and rail infrastructure will be. Estimates range from £5bn to £15bn. To date Heathrow has only committed to contributing £1bn.
- Both the Western and Southern Rail Access schemes to Heathrow are required now to help increase public transport access to the airport. Neither scheme has a clear funding path and both have suffered from multiple delays.
- TfL analysis shows that a 3rd runway would increase delays at road junctions and reduce average traffic speed.
- The Airports Commission found that to deliver no increase in airport related traffic (as promised by Heathrow), road user charging - of the order of £40 - would also be required.

AIR & NOISE POLLUTION

- The Government accepts Heathrow expansion would have a “significant negative” effect on Air Pollution.
- Government has provided no evidence to show how Heathrow can expand and comply with legal limits and there are currently no enforcement methods should Heathrow not meet legal requirements.
- The area around Heathrow is the second major hot spot for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) pollution in London, with breaches of legal limits recorded close to the airport for many years.
- Expansion would result in an additional 260,000 flights each year or over 700 extra flights per day.
- Data from the Civil Aviation Authority revealed that 2.2 MILLION people experience an increase in noise from an expanded Heathrow.
- Parliament’s Transport Select Committee concluded that 323,684 people will be newly affected by noise from Heathrow.
- Hundreds of thousands of school children across London and the South East are already exposed to aircraft noise above 54 decibels, the sound level threshold which has a negative effect on children’s behaviour, memory and learning.

CURRENT STATE OF PLAY

- Heathrow is conducting an internal review of the business case for a 3rd runway, which they believe is still viable.
- A final decision will then be made on whether and how to proceed to bring forward a planning application for a Development Consent Order.
- Heathrow’s new CEO Thomas Woldbye has declared that whilst the airport remains committed to delivering the third runway, this will take place in the longer term and therefore they are examining options for improving the airport and getting more passengers through in the short term, using larger (and noisier) aircraft and focusing on the long haul markets over short haul.
- If Heathrow decide to proceed with a 3rd runway, then they will need to restart their planning and enabling works which will require extensive rehiring of personnel, consultants and other external expertise, before they can submit their planning application. It is anticipated that this will take several years.

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- The new Government stated recently that Heathrow expansion is subject to four key tests, on the economic impact, legally binding climate targets and on air and noise pollution.

WHAT GOVERNMENT SHOULD DO

- The Government has stated that all National Policy Statements will be reviewed within its first year of office. This must include the ANPS, which should be withdrawn on the basis on an extremely out of date evidence base.
- If Government opts to review the ANPS instead of withdrawing it, it must include an updated economic analysis including new cost-benefit analysis as well as new costs of carbon abatement.
- Government should develop a truly national aviation strategy with a cumulative carbon emissions framework.