

Heathrow Statement

By Tony Arbour AM

There has long been unanimity on the London Assembly that Heathrow expansion would be a mistake. We have argued that in terms of noise pollution and air pollution, Heathrow expansion would be unacceptable and the extent of the property destruction (800 homes would be compulsorily purchased) is considerable. 1/3 of everyone in Europe negatively impacted by aircraft noise is negatively impacted by Heathrow. This would only get worse if expansion were allowed.

A further major issue is finance. It is unclear who will pay to build it and how will they earn a return. In principle the airport would build it with shareholder money and debt, add it to their Regulated Asset Base and is allowed by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to earn an agreed return earned by charging airlines (and indirectly their passengers). This gives no incentive to keep costs down. The CAA is meant to keep costs in check but the airlines understandably don't trust the airport not to try and stiff them with the bill. It would be even more unacceptable if taxpayers had to pay.

There is disagreement over the importance of hub capacity in comparison to overall capacity. If overall capacity is all-important then London already has more capacity than any other city in the world. If hub capacity is all-important then it is crucial to remember that 3 runways will not be sufficient. However building a 4th runway would be even more expensive and even more difficult. This is why the Group has argued in the past that building a new airport in the Thames Estuary would be preferable.

In spite of these issues, it seems likely that Parliament will vote to approve the expansion of Heathrow, when it comes before the House of Commons later this month.

7 reasons not to expand Heathrow

- Expanding Heathrow would compound the significant problems that already exist in terms of noise and air pollution.
- Heathrow expansion would be extremely expensive: almost twice as much as the cost of building a second runway at Gatwick.
- DfT analysis showed that Britain would gain up to £75.3billion from building a second runway at Gatwick, compared to £74.2billion from the third runway option at Heathrow. Given the respective costs of the two proposals, this alone should hole the Heathrow plan below the waterline.
- The cost of expanding Heathrow is a gross underestimate because it doesn't include the huge cost to the taxpayer of building all the additional transport infrastructure that would be required.
- Heathrow expansion would also entail compulsorily purchasing and destroying 800 homes – the entire village of Sipson. Proponents would need an unbelievably strong argument to displace 2,200 people. They don't have one.
- Of all the people in Europe negatively impacted by aircraft noise, a full third are negatively impacted by Heathrow.
- How the funding of Heathrow will be achieved – Though taxpayers?

