

Short-Haul Flights: Clogging up Heathrow's Runways

The number of flights using Heathrow could be cut by around 100,000 a year if there were no flights to and from the destinations where there *already* is a good rail alternative.

There are around Heathrow 100,000 flights each year serving Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Brussels, Paris, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Durham Tees Valley.

Flight levels at Heathrow could be cut to below the levels they were at 10 years ago.

The figures* are startling:

Paris	60 flights a day to and from Heathrow
Amsterdam	50
Edinburgh	40
Manchester	36
Brussels	30
Glasgow	28
Newcastle	12
Leeds/Bradford	10
Rotterdam	6
Durham/Tees Valley	6

* the figures are those of a fairly typical day but will vary throughout the year

■ This makes Paris Heathrow's top destination

■ Amsterdam is in joint second place with Dublin

■ And in fourth place is New York with 42 flights, just ahead of Edinburgh

There is no doubt that these flights to the top ten rail destinations are clogging up Heathrow. It may well not be realistic to get rid of all of them. Some of their passengers are those transferring to/from long-haul flights but a reduction in short-haul flights would make direct flights from other the smaller UK and European airports more financially viable....while probably decreasing overall flight numbers at these airports as well as at Heathrow.

Last year about 473,000 flights used Heathrow. This figure could be reduced by about 100,000 if these destinations were no longer served by Heathrow. But, even halving the number of planes serving these ten destinations, would substantially cut flight numbers at Heathrow. It would certainly mean that current expansion plans – the proposals to build a third runway or make more use of the existing runways by ending runway alternation – would seem increasingly irrelevant. And that the current cap of 480,000 could remain or be reduced.

The 'Railway 10'

The research compared train and air times to the destinations.

(we added a 1.5 hour check-in time for domestic flights; 2 hours for European flights - though the check-in time is likely to be less for passengers coming to Heathrow; also for passengers transferring to these short-haul flights from other flights at Heathrow); and the required half hour for Euro Star travellers. We did not include journey times to and from the stations or airports. Nor did we compare fare levels because of the huge variation there is for both air and rail fares).

Location	Flights per Day	Time by Plane	Time by train
Paris	60	3hrs	3hrs
Amsterdam	50	3.25hrs	8hrs*
Edinburgh	40	2.5hrs	4.75hrs
Manchester	36	2.5hrs	2.5hrs
Brussels	30	3.25hrs	2.75hrs
Glasgow	28	2.75hrs	5.75hrs
Newcastle	12	2.75hrs	3.15hrs
Leeds/Bradford	10	2.5hrs	2.5hrs
Rotterdam	6	3.25hrs	7hrs*
Durham Tees Valley	6	2.5hrs	3.25hrs

* times will be reduced by about 2 hours when the high-speed link from Brussels to Amsterdam is complete)

Getting On Line?

A huge number of Heathrow flights serve other European destinations.

The main ones are:

Frankfurt	40 flights per day
Milan	32
Munich	28
Aberdeen	28
Copenhagen	26
Rome	24
Stockholm	24
Zurich	24
Madrid	22
Belfast	20

These airports account for around **another 100,000 flights** per year. As rail services improve across Europe, rail will become a more realistic alternative for a number of these places. But a significant switch is unlikely to occur until air passengers are paying more realistic fares.

Beyond Europe

Contrary to what is often believed, a sizeable number of the destinations served by Heathrow are within Europe. Apart from New York, the most popular destinations are all European.

There are:

28 flights to [Chicago](#) - the same as Aberdeen!

26 flights to [Hong Kong](#) - less than half the number to Paris

24 flights to [Los Angeles](#) - less than Glasgow

And note: there are a total of [54,000](#) flights a year serving Heathrow's 'competitor' airports – Charles de Gaulle, Schiphol and Frankfurt.

Next Steps

Is reducing flight numbers at Heathrow really realistic?

At the very least the huge number of short-haul flight destinations with good rail services served by Heathrow opens up the *possibility* of reducing flight numbers.

Reducing flight numbers by 100,000 would bring flight numbers to the levels they were at in the mid-1990s. It would bring significant advantages:

■ it would improve the quality of life for those living close to Heathrow - the big rise in plane numbers over the last decade has meant that many people in West London and Berkshire feel they are now besieged by aircraft;

■ it would cut aircraft noise across a wide area - it is in the last 10 years that aircraft noise has become a serious problem across huge swathes of London and the Home Counties as the use of flight paths has expanded to cater for the increase in the number of planes;

■ it would reduce air pollution levels around Heathrow – at present some areas are above the EU legal limits (set to come into force in 2010);

■ it would signal a willingness to tackle climate change – aviation is the fastest-growing contributor to climate change: the most immediate and simplest way to tackle that is to cut the number of short-haul flights where rail is a realistic alternative.

■ it would allow for some increase in long-haul business flights - over the coming decades there is likely to be an increase in the number of long-haul flights serving the expanding economies of China and India; a reduction in short-haul flights could make space for them.

How could it be done?

The easiest way would be for the Government to:

[increase](#) Air Passenger Duty on all short-haul flights significantly;

[reduce](#) the number of slots available to short-haul flights;

[invest](#) some of the money raised in improving the rail alternatives.

• All the air figures in this report are based on those on the BAA Heathrow website. The rail information is taken from www.seat61.com

This report has been produced by HACAN, the organisation representing residents under the Heathrow flight path. Email info@hacan.org.uk or call 0207 737 6641 November 2006
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