

Another 10 wasted years?

This short paper asks if a third runway is ever deliverable

The last Labour Government tried and failed to build a third runway. Many of the obstacles are still there. Should this Government be risking another failure?

Airport	Designated by the DfT for noise purposes	Population Impact	Population as a percentage of the total number of people affected across the European Union
Heathrow	+	775,500	28.5%
Manchester		94,500	3.7%
Glasgow		63,500	2.5%
Birmingham		47,300	1.9%
Aberdeen		38,500	1.6%
Edinburgh		35,500	1.5%
London City		32,300	1.3%
Southampton		32,100	1.3%
Gatwick	+	31,300	1.3%
East Midlands		30,500	1.4%
Stansted	+	29,400	1.4%
Luton		8,600	0.3%
Leeds Bradford		8,400	0.3%
Newcastle		5,300	0.2%
Liverpool John Lennon		5,100	0.2%
		Total	1,044,300
			41.0%

Heathrow is in a noise league of its own. As the table shows, 28% of all people impacted by aircraft noise across Europe live under the Heathrow flight paths. The noise mitigation measures proposed by the Government, such as a marginally tougher night flight regime and the extension of respite to more communities, are unlikely to dent the level of opposition to a new runway. Although polls show some support for a 3rd runway, there is also consistent and significant opposition. That opposition is the building block on which campaigns against a 3rd runway has been built. Given the numbers which will always be affected at Heathrow, the opposition is unlikely to go away. A runway anywhere else would never generate anything like the same level of local opposition.

Source: European Commission, CAA. Figures based on the populations affected by noise using the standard measure of 55 LDen-2005 figures

Heathrow will struggle to say below the legal limits on **air pollution**. Post-Brexit, the Government is unlikely to drop the tough air pollution levels, given the public concern there is about the issue. To meet them, Heathrow will require more than cleaner planes. There will need to be a significant move away from diesel vehicles on the surrounding roads; no more airport-related traffic on the roads; a possible congestion charge in the area. These are huge 'asks'. Are they really deliverable?

Direct action continues against a third runway. There is no sign environmentalists, concerned about climate change, are going away. In fact their links with activists in other areas, such as fracking, are growing as are their links with other airport protest movements across Europe. Their activities will, at the very least, add to the bill for a third runway.

Some of the fiercest protests are coming from people who will **lose their homes** to make way for a third runway. Almost 800 homes will be demolished and Heathrow has recognized that people in over 3,000 more might need to be bought out because the noise will be intolerable. Although the compensation offer is higher than last time and some people will take it, the ferocity of the opposition of those who do not want to move (and the human-interest nature of their stories) remain an obstacle.

The uncertainty around **how much the taxpayer will need to fork out** is an obstacle. Heathrow will pay the £17bn cost of the runway but estimates vary considerably about the cost of the road and rail infrastructure. The Airports Commission put it at £5-£6bn. Transport for London puts it as high as £18bn. Heathrow told the Environmental Audit Committee it would only pay £1.1bn (on the basis that was the proportion of the infrastructure that was directly required for the new runway).

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www.hacan.org.uk March 2017