New Consultation on National Policy Statement: Summary Key Points

This paper attempts to provide a short factual account of the key points and the main arguments in the consultation documents. It doesn't provide a critique of them. Nor is it HACAN's response to the consultation. We also have done a four pager along the same lines: http://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/DfT-Consultation-October-2017-4-page-summary.pdf

The main reason the Department for Transport has embarked on this eight week consultation is to invite comments on the revised passenger forecasts and the updated air quality plan as it applies to airport expansion (although it also briefly covers noise, carbon emissions and surface access).

The revised economic forecasts are found here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653879/updated-appraisal-report-airport-capacity-in-the-south-east.pdf
The air quality plan can be found here:
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653775/2017-plan-update-to-air-quality-re-analysis.pdf

1. Revised Economic Forecasts: Future Demand
The new forecasts suggest that passenger demand will be higher than predicted by the Airports Commission Report. The big demand will be in London and the South East. It is not coming from the rest of the UK. Higher passenger demand in London means that London's airports will be full sooner without expansion than previously forecast. London's five major airports are now expected to be full by 2034, with four out of five full by 2025. By 2050 demand at London's airports is expected to outstrip capacity by at least 34%, even on the department's low demand forecast.

2. Economic Benefits
The economic benefits of both a third runway at Heathrow and a second runway at Gatwick are higher than in the original MPS consultation document (though both a lot lower than the original estimates produced by the Airports Commission): Gatwick up from £53 billion to £75 billion; Heathrow from £61 billion to £74 billion. But the DfT argues this does not tell the whole story. It still favours Heathrow because it will"deliver better international connectivity earlier on, with large increases in flights by 2030" and in the longer-term, "Heathrow expansion continues to deliver substantially more long haul flights. These long haul flights are particularly important for connecting businesses to emerging markets, and account for the majority of air freight."

3. Jobs
The consultation document states that expansion at Heathrow or Gatwick will bring jobs but acknowledges that some, but not all, will be relocated from elsewhere.

4. Surface Access
The DfT has no further work on the costs of surface access. This means the cost of creating sufficient road and rail schemes to serve either a second runway at Gatwick or a third runway at Heathrow remain uncertain. The estimated cosst of the road and rail infrastructure that might be required at Heathrow has ranged from just over £3 billion (DfT) to £18 billion (Transport for London)..

5. Noise
The DfT acknowledges that all the schemes "have the potential for significant negative noise impacts". But it believes the impacts will be less than previously thought due to the impact of quiet planes. At Heathrow it says around 92,700 more people will be affected by noise with a third runway than compared to a two runway Heathrow Airport in 2030: i.e. a total of 653,900 in 2030.

6. Air Quality
The DfT argues that, even with a second runway, Gatwick is at "low-risk" of exceeding the Government's air pollution targets. There is a "high-risk" of a three runway Heathrow not being compliant with the targets between the year a new runway is expected to open, 2025, and 2029. There is little Heathrow can do about this, the DfT argues, as the risk arises from the uncertainty in the modelling and, more especially, the possibility the Government does not make sufficient progress in implementing its air quality plan as a whole – for example in tacking emissions from motor vehicles. From 2030 onwards, the risk falls to medium.

7. Carbon Emissions
The DfT is predicting lower carbon emissions for either Gatwick or Heathrow than the Airports Commission estimated. This is for two reasons: it expects that more passengers will be carried in fewer planes than previously thought because the planes will be bigger and fuller and it expects the planes to be more fuel-efficient than it originally estimated. Heathrow would result in an initial increase in emissions but these would be expected to fall by 2050. The DfT concludes that "that any of the schemes could be delivered within the UK's obligations under the Climate Change Act."

Compiled by John Stewart, Chair HACAN **29/10/17**