

National Policy Statement

Briefing from HACAN

The Department for Transport (DfT) released the National Policy Statement (NPS) for public consultation on 2nd February. The consultation ends on 25th May. This is essentially a consultation on a third runway at Heathrow. In October 2016 the Government announced that a third runway at Heathrow was its preferred option. But, according to planning law, it must now consult on it. It will not become Government policy until Parliament approves the NPS. The vote is expected to take place in late 2017/early 2018. If the NPS is approved, the way will then be clear for Heathrow Airport to draw up detailed plans. These will need to be put out for consultation before being submitted to a planning inquiry. Heathrow does not expect to get approval for the new runway until 2020/21.

Responding to the Consultation

You can respond to the consultation in one of three ways: by giving online answers to the consultation document; sending an email with your views; writing in with your views. Our suggestion is that you email or write as that gives you more freedom to air your views. To submit your response online go to www.gov.uk/dft/heathrow-airport-expansion or email it to runwayconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk or post it to FREEPOST RUNWAY CONSULTATION. Hard copies of the draft Airports NPS are available by calling 0800 6894968.

You can find the NPS at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/588764/draft-airports-nps-web-version.pdf. But you might find the DfT's media briefing more digestible: <http://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/DfT-consultation-press-release.pdf>

The NPS is asking for views in three main areas:

- is there a need for a new runway in London and the South East by 2030 and, if so where it should be?
- the local impacts of a new runway;
- the “conditions” Heathrow need to agree to before it gets permission for a new runway

1. The need for a new runway in the South East

On current projections, the airports in the South East will be full by 2030. Only tough fiscal measures which severely restricted the growth in demand would stop that happening. The Government argues that “aviation expansion is important for the UK both in boosting our economy and jobs and promoting us on the world stage”. It believes Heathrow is best placed to do that, arguing it will bring a £61 billion boost to the UK economy over 60 years;

HACAN comment

We haven't engaged much in the debate about whether a new runway is required as our members have a variety of views. Some argue that no new runway can be justified on climate change grounds. Others accept the need for a new runway or even a new airport in the South East. And some would prefer to see the development of regional airports. Our focus has been to argue that, if a new runway is required, it should not be at Heathrow because the downsides are considerable. We also note that the economic benefits of a Heathrow runway (£60bn to the UK economy over 60 years) have been scaled down significantly from the £211bn first talked of in the Airports Commission's report and on which Heathrow based its promises to the regions of increased jobs and prosperity.

2. The local impacts of a third runway

According to the European Commission, at least 725,000 people live under the Heathrow flight paths; that is, 28% of all people impacted by **aircraft noise** across Europe. A new runway would bring a considerable number of new people under a flight path for a first time. Additionally, those communities which currently enjoy a half day's break from the noise are likely to find that reduced to a third of a day (in order to ensure people under the new runway also get respite). A third runway is expected to increase the number of planes using Heathrow by around 250,000 a year. Quieter planes and improved operation practices cannot wish that number away.

The NPS does not indicate where **flight paths** will be. We will not know this until 2018/19 when Heathrow publishes its detailed plans. For local people this is unacceptable. It may be the biggest flaw in the consultation. It is worth saying so loud and clear.

Air Pollution levels already exceed the official safe levels in areas around Heathrow. With another quarter of a million or so planes using the airport if a third runway is built, is it really feasible that air **pollution** levels will fall even with quieter and cleaner planes coming on-stream? Vehicle traffic is the big problem. It is probably that the only way that air pollution levels will not exceed the legal limits is by restricting the number of planes permitted to use the third runway in its early years. The NPS admits that in 2025, the year a new runway would expect to open, air pollution would be a big problem as there would still be a lot of dirty vehicles on the roads. By 2030, when it expects there to be many more cleaner vehicles, the NPS argues that air pollution levels around Heathrow will be below the legal limits.

At least 783 **homes will need to be demolished** to make way for a third runway. And many more people might need to leave their homes if the noise proves intolerable. Heathrow has offered to buy nearly 4,000 homes in total. Of course these people are being offered compensation but will it be enough to enable them to buy a new home in the area of their choice? And, for many, nothing can compensate for the loss of their community.

The NPS is still unclear how much **taxpayers' money** will be required to pay for the road and rail infrastructure required for a new runway. Heathrow will pay for some of it (they also, of course, pay for the runway) but it looks as if the cost to the taxpayer could run into billions.

3. The conditions attached to the third runway. Heathrow will be required to:

- ensure it delivers its promise to provide six more domestic routes across the UK by 2030 - Belfast International, Liverpool, Newquay, Humberside, Prestwick and Durham Tees Valley;
- provide a 'world-class' package of support for communities affected by expansion including noise insulation for homes and schools;
- put in place measures to mitigate the impacts of noise including legally binding noise targets, periods of predictable respite and a ban of six and a half hours on scheduled night flights;
- implement measures to deliver on its commitment of no increase in airport related road traffic, with more than half of passengers using public transport;
- honour its commitment of paying home owners 25 percent above market value rate plus costs for the compulsory purchase of their homes if needed to make way for the new runway.

HACAN comment

These conditions will be challenging for the airport. In effect, the DfT is requiring Heathrow to find ways of honouring the pledges it has made.

- Ensuring routes are provided to these **six domestic destinations** will not be easy. Most of them will bring a low return for airlines in comparison to much more profitable international routes. How will Heathrow persuade the airlines to operate these domestic routes?
- Providing a **‘world class’ package of support** for affected communities will be expensive. Heathrow has set aside £750 million to do so but is this enough to provide quality insulation for all the homes, schools, hospitals impacted within the contour Heathrow has promised to cover (the 55Lden contour which, on its London side, stretches as far as Clapham)?
- In principle **legal binding noise targets** and predictable periods of **respite** are welcome. But the devil will be in the detail which we haven’t seen. A **night flight ban** of six and a half hours, while an improvement on the current situation, is still too short. The average adult sleeps for 7 hours. A 7 hour night ban should be the very minimum.
- Heathrow’s long-standing commitment to **no increase in airport related traffic** if a third runway is built would be welcome but is it deliverable? The onus is on Heathrow to prove that it is.
- We commented on the **compensation** offered to people who would lose their homes earlier in this briefing

We would like to see all these conditions made legally-binding.

One other area you may wish to comment on:

A 4th runway The DfT says; “The Government agrees with the Airports Commission’s conclusions on a fourth runway, and makes clear in the draft Airports NPS that it does not see the need for a fourth runway at Heathrow Airport. This policy is intended to provide residents with certainty about the extent of future expansion.” HACAN would like to see a legally-binding agreement ruling it out.

Feel free to use anything in this briefing but always remember you don’t need to be an expert to respond. Simply explaining how you feel in you own words will be sufficient.

HACAN gives a voice to residents under the Heathrow flight paths. We can be contacted at info@hacan.org.uk; tel 020 8876 0455, website: www.hacan.org.uk

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