

A 3rd Runway at Heathrow

10 reasons why we oppose it

The previous Government set up the Airports Commission, chaired by Sir Howard Davies, to look at whether new runways would be needed. It narrowed the choice to a 2nd runway at Gatwick or a 3rd runway at Heathrow. In its final report, published in July 2015, it recommended 3rd runway at Heathrow. But it is not a done deal. The Government makes the final decision. An announcement is expected before Christmas. But that will not mean it is a done deal. It could face legal challenges. It will need to get planning permission. The last Labour Government gave permission for a 3rd runway but it never saw the light of day because of the weight of public opposition. It could happen again.

A 3rd runway would mean 250,000 extra flights a year using Heathrow

1. Over 700,000 live under the Heathrow flight paths; making London the most overflown city in Europe

Number of people affected:

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	*	725,500	28.5%
Manchester		94,000	3.7%
Glasgow		63,600	2.5%
Birmingham		47,900	1.9%
Aberdeen		16,300	0.6%
Edinburgh		15,000	0.5%
London City		12,200	0.5%
Southampton		12,100	0.5%
Gatwick	*	11,900	0.5%
East Midlands		10,500	0.4%
Stansted	*	9,400	0.4%
Luton		8,600	0.3%
Leeds Bradford		8,400	0.3%
Newcastle		5,900	0.2%
Liverpool John Lennon		5,700	0.2%
	Totals	1,044,300	41.0%

Source: European Commission, CAA. Figures based on the populations affected by noise using the standard measure of 55 LD_{den}-2006 figures

2. At least 783 homes would be demolished; up to 4,000 could be bought up

That is simply the number required for the runway itself. Heathrow has recognized that up to 4,000 in total might need to be bought up because the current plans leave too many people uncomfortably close to the new runway.

3. Tens of thousands would be under a flight path for the first time

A new runway inevitably means a new flight path. Many people in West London, (including parts of Chiswick, Brentford and Hammersmith) as well as areas west of the airport could get planes for the first time for possibly as many as 13 hours in one day.

4. A third runway is not essential for London's economy

More business people and tourists fly into London each year than fly to any other city in the world. Most have no preference which airport they use. This trend will continue whether or not a third runway is built at Heathrow. The Airports Commission, while favouring Heathrow, still called Gatwick a credible option.

5. There are big air pollution problems around Heathrow

Heathrow is the only major UK airport where air pollution levels remain stubbornly above EU legal limits. The pollution comes from the planes but also from the traffic on the nearby motorways. Despite cleaner planes and cars coming on-stream, there is real doubt whether, with a third runway and its extra 250,000 flights, the air pollution limits will be met.

6. A 3rd runway would cause health problems

There is clear evidence that the high levels of air pollution in London are causing health problems, and even early death. Studies also show that noise can cause stress and heart problems as well as impact on children's learning.

7. A 3rd runway would require expensive rail and road upgrades

The M25 between junctions 14 and 15 (Heathrow to the M4) is the busiest section of motorway in UK. It may need to be upgraded even without a 3rd runway but part of the M25 would need to be put in a tunnel if a new runway is built. It is estimated that the road and rail upgrades could cost at least £5 billion. Heathrow Airport will pay for any new runway but could well ask for public money to pay for the surface access improvements.

8. It would cause big climate problems

A third runway in itself would not bust the Government's targets to cut CO2 emissions but it would mean that the planes using the country's other airports would need to be strictly controlled.

9. It would face massive opposition

There would be opposition not just from local residents but also from environmentalists, many local authorities, politicians from all parties as well as some businesses and trade unions. When the last Government tried to build a third runway, it was defeated by this coalition. Huge rallies attended by thousands of local people, cross-party political activity, eye-catching direct action, all backed up by sound arguments saw off the plans for a third runway.

10. There are alternatives

Other airports are being looked at where the impacts of expansion would be less but there is also scope for a switch to rail. Around 20% of the flights currently using Heathrow are domestic or to near-Europe. And, indeed, 45% of air trips within Europe are 500 kilometres or less in length. If trains were fast and more affordable, a number of people would switch from air to rail.