

Runnymede and Heathrow expansion

An assessment by HACAN of the positive and negative impacts of a new runway at Heathrow on Runnymede



The next Government will need to make a decision on whether or not to build a third runway at Heathrow. Heathrow Airport wants one but it faces considerable opposition.

A Summary Table (based on Airports Commission data)

	Contribution to the economy *	Jobs created (by 2050)	Numbers impacted by noise 2050 **	Number of properties demolished	Number of new homes needed	Impact on air pollution
Gatwick	£42 - £127bn (over the period 2020-2080)	7,900 - 49,000	24,000 – 35,000	186	0-18,400	Unlikely to exceed EU legal limits
Heathrow	£112bn - £211bn	64,100 - 180,000	620,000 – 680,000	783 (but Heathrow willing to buy almost 4,000)	Up to 70,000	Will find EU limits challenging
Heathrow Hub	£101bn - £214bn	47,000 - 164,000	850,000 – 920,000	242	Up to 70,000	Will find EU limits challenging

Notes:

* The Commission expects the economic benefits to be reduced once it has completed its work on factoring in the cost of carbon. We are not likely to have this figure until it publishes its final report.

** At present 766,000 are impacted by noise from Heathrow. The Commission agrees with Heathrow that operational improvements, less noisy planes and respite periods will bring the numbers down, even with its 3rd runway. Heathrow Hub argues the numbers affected by its scheme will be less than the Commission argues due to its respite periods which the Commission acknowledges might happen. Without a new runway, the Commission estimates that by 2050, 583,000 will be impacted at Heathrow and 9,500 at Gatwick.

Economy and Jobs

It is clear that a new runway will bring national economic benefits, even though the scale of those benefits is uncertain. It is equally clear that some of these economic benefits will be felt in the local authorities in the Heathrow area, including Runnymede. However, given the environmental disbenefits Heathrow expansion brings to Runnymede, **the question really in need of an answer is just how essential is a new runway to Runnymede's economy?**

The Airports Commission highlights the strength of the Runnymede economy (*Local Economy Impacts: Assessment*, November 2014): “Low unemployment and strong growth characterise many of the local authorities, with Runnymede, for example, aiming to increase the employment rate to 80 per cent, after enjoying a substantial job growth rate of 25 per cent over the previous decade of up to 47,500 jobs”.

The health of the **Runnymede** economy, therefore, is not dependent on the expansion of Heathrow. It might, though, provide some jobs for low-skilled people within the local authority. The Commission recognizes that “the job mix at Heathrow Airport is predominately low skilled”

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and points out that the percentage of residents (of working age) in Runnymede “with no qualifications” is amongst the highest of the local authorities in the wider Heathrow area.

Surface Access

The impact of extra traffic serving a new runway is a concern for Runnymede. 72 million passengers used Heathrow in 2013 (the last full year for which figures are available). The Commission estimates that by 2030, with a new runway in operation, passenger numbers will rise to between 132 and 149 million passengers.

It argues rail and road improvements, expected to materialise (such as Crossrail, improved Southern Rail Access and adding more capacity to the motorway and trunk road network), will mean that “a third runway at Heathrow only marginally increases traffic on the strategic road network... primarily because of a switch in mode share to public transport and higher car occupancy predicted for employees.” Furthermore, “there may also be some very localised road impacts around the airport itself. However, detailed analysis has not been undertaken to estimate traffic flows on local surface roads around the airport.”

Moreover, the former CEO of Heathrow Airport said before leaving his job last year that, in order to deal with the air pollution problems, traffic on the M4 in the vicinity of the airport would need to be “diesel-free” to allow for a third runway to be built and that only some form of congestion charge could keep levels to a manageable level if a third runway was built: **Heathrow’s very own road tax!**

Housing

If a third runway is not built, the Commission expects there will not be a need for significantly more housing in Runnymede: “there is lower expected growth in less urban areas with a lower current population such as Runnymede and South Buckinghamshire.” With a third runway in place, Runnymede would need to build its share on new housing. The Commission puts the total number of new homes that would be required across all local authorities at a maximum of 70,000. It recognises that would be “**challenging**” for the councils.

Noise

Parts of Runnymede are significantly affected by noise at present. There were some additional problems caused during the recent trials. The Commission endorses Heathrow’s position that the number of people affected by noise will fall even if a third runway is built due to the introduction of quieter planes, improved operational practices and more extensive use of respite. Some argue that this is putting a lot of faith in less noisy aircraft coming on-stream.

The Commission is less sanguine about the Heathrow Hub proposals which it estimates would increase the numbers impacted by noise, a view disputed by the proposers of the scheme. What is certain is that, with an expanded Heathrow, there would be more aircraft coming over Runnymede as annual flight numbers would increase from 476,000 at present to over 700,000.

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28% of all people impacted by aircraft noise across Europe live under the Heathrow flight paths.

AIRPORT	AFFECTED	AIRPORT	AFFECTED
London Heathrow	725,000	Manchester	94,000
Frankfurt	238,700	Brussels	49,700
Paris de Gaulle	170,000	Amsterdam	43,700
Paris Orly	110,000	Madrid	43,300
Gatwick	11,900	Stansted	9,400

However, a new runway inevitably means a new flight path. Many people in the Runnymede borough would be overflown for the first time. We are likely to see more detail in coming weeks from Heathrow as to the potential location of flight paths were their proposal to receive planning permission.

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Air Quality

Air pollution is a problem in the places adjacent to Heathrow. In a few areas it remains stubbornly above the EU legal limits. If this remains the case by 2020, it is likely the UK Government would be fined by the European Union. Heathrow Airport recognizes the scale of the problem. Despite the continuing introduction of quieter planes it has acknowledged that it could struggle to meet the EU limits if a third runway is built unless measures such as road pricing are introduced on the motorway network around the airport in order to manage traffic levels.

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. 45% of air trips within Europe are 500 kilometers or less in length. If trains were fast and more affordable, a number of people would switch from air to rail.

It would face huge 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. MPs Phillip Hammond, Theresa May and Adam Afriyie all have expressed opposition to a new runway.

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When the Labour Government tried to build a third runway, it was defeated by this coalition. For an account of how the campaign against expansion was won in 2010 and the role local authorities had, click here: [How the Heathrow Campaign was Won](#).

References to the Airports Commission in this briefing can be located in the Airports Commission's *Local Economy Impacts: Assessment* document via www.gov.uk/government/organisations/airports-commission.

HACAN (Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise) is a residents-led campaigning and lobbying group who have campaigned against the expansion of Heathrow Airport since 1966.

For any information, please get in touch using info@hacan.org.uk or come and meet us in person after the Corporate Management Committee meeting on 22nd January.