

# Third Runway at Heathrow

## 20 Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How many runways does Heathrow have at present?

It has two runways.

### 2. How many flights use the airport?

Over the last few years it has hovered around 476,000 a year. There is a cap of 480,000 on the number of flights that can use the airport in any one year.

### 3. How many people are overflowed?

According to the European Commission, over 700,000 people are impacted by flights using Heathrow.

### 4. How does this compare with other airports?

Heathrow is in a league of its own. 28% of the people across Europe affected by aircraft noise live under the Heathrow flight paths?

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<sub>den</sub>-2006 figures

Airport	Population within the 55L <sub>den</sub> contour
London Heathrow	725,500
Frankfurt	238,700
Paris Charles de Gaulle	170,000
Paris Orly	110,000
Brussels	49,700
Amsterdam	43,700
Madrid	43,300

### 5. How many flights will use the airport if a third runway is built?

Well over 700,000

## **6. How many people will be disturbed by noise?**

Estimates vary from 620,000 – 920,000. The reason for the variation is there is still a lot of uncertainty about the impact of the measures that would be introduced to limit noise: less noisy planes; improved operational practices; respite periods, i.e. times when communities will get a break from the noise.

## **7. How many people in total will be disturbed if a second runway is built at Gatwick?**

A maximum of 35,000

## **8. Why is Gatwick relevant?**

The next Government will be asked to choose between a second runway at Gatwick and a new runway at Heathrow. A body called the Airports Commission has been set up to assess the options. It will make a recommendation in summer 2015. The Government, though, will make the final decision. It need not accept the Commission's recommendation.

## **9. So why isn't 'Boris' Island or Stansted being looked at?**

The Airports Commission has ruled both of these options out. But, of course, any Government could bring them into play again.

## **10. What's the case for a new runway in the South East?**

The Airports Commission says it is likely the current runways in the South East will be full by 2030. There will be a need for a new runway. It will be particularly important for improving connections with the emerging economies such as China and India. The Commission has concluded there is not a commercial case for a new runway outside the South East. It is equally clear that there is no *immediate* need for a new runway even in the South East: London remains the best-connected city in the world.

## **11. What's the economic case for a new runway at Heathrow?**

Heathrow Airport argues the UK economy will lose out unless Heathrow expands. Heathrow is one of Europe's main 'hub' airports. A hub airport is one where a lot of people transfer from one airline to the other without leaving the airport. Heathrow argues these 'transfer' passengers are important for this reason: transfer passengers make it economical for airlines to run more frequent flights to more destinations. One of the examples they use is Mexico City. There are enough passengers who want to fly directly between London and Mexico City to warrant a few flights a week. But if you add in Mexico City bound passengers who are transferring at Heathrow from smaller airports such as Copenhagen, they make it commercially viable to run many more flights from London to Mexico City each week which in turn makes London potentially a more attractive place for Mexican businesses to invest in (or vice versa).

## **12. Is Heathrow's economic argument for expansion accepted by everyone?**

No it is not. The counter argument, used by Gatwick Airport, is that, because London is so popular as a destination (more passengers terminate in London than any other city in the world), it is not so dependent on transfer passengers to make flights commercially viable as somewhere like Schiphol. People coming to London tend not to mind which airport they use. Critics also point out that a significant number of the transfer passengers are going to places like New York where the many flights from Heathrow are not dependent on them.

### **13. Is there is more than one place where a new runway could be built at Heathrow?**

There are two options on the table. Heathrow Airport itself wants to build a new runway between the A4 and M4, north of the existing northern runway. But there is another company called Heathrow Hub which proposes building a new runway to the west of the existing northern runway but on the same alignment.

### **14. Wouldn't homes be destroyed?**

Yes, they would. Heathrow Airport's proposal would require 783 homes to be demolished. But Heathrow has offered to buy nearly 4,000 homes because many people would be so close to the new runway that they might find the noise intolerable. The Heathrow Hub option would knock down 242 homes. People would get compensation but they are asking: would it be enough to buy an equivalent property reasonably nearby?

### **15. Which areas would be under the Heathrow new flight paths?**

Heathrow's proposed runway would mean a new flight path over Heston, Osterley Park, Brentford and almost certainly parts of Chiswick and Hammersmith. To the west Datchet and Eton would be in the line of fire. The Heathrow Hub proposal would not require a new runway but it would mean a big increase in planes for people under the existing northern flight paths – places like Kew, Isleworth and Hounslow.

### **15. What about air pollution?**

Areas around Heathrow are already over the EU limits on air pollution. The Airports Commission says that, even with cleaner planes, Heathrow would find it "challenging" to meet the limits if a third runway is built. A lot of the air pollution in the Heathrow area comes not from the planes but from the car traffic. Even Heathrow has admitted that drastic measures – such as a congestion charging scheme or a banning of diesel vehicles on the surrounding motorways – might be required if the legal limits are to be met. But the jury is out on air pollution and more work is being done on it.

### **16. Will the surrounding roads cope with the extra traffic?**

Again, the jury is out. Crossrail, new rail connections west of the airport, schemes to increase the capacity of the motorway network in the area plus any possible congestion charging scheme will help but there remains concern locally about whether the roads will cope.

### **17. What would be the environmental impacts of a 2<sup>nd</sup> runway at Gatwick?**

Much less. 186 homes would be demolished. But the Airports Commission doesn't foresee air pollution problems and believes that the surrounding road and rail network could cope (though this is challenged by local people). The Commission also rejects the idea that a second runway would mean the Sussex countryside would be covered in new houses as it expects most of the new jobs would be taken by people living in South London (Croydon is only 16 minutes away by train) and in some of the deprived towns on the South Coast.

### **18. Is there any support locally for a new runway at Heathrow?**

There is but the extent of it is disputed. Referenda carried out by some of the West London boroughs found around 72% of residents opposed a new runway. However, polls commissioned by the pro-Heathrow lobby group Back Heathrow put support for a new runway

at just under 50%. But the polls have been widely criticized because of the way they were conducted and are not seen as a reliable barometer of public opinion.

### **19. Where is the opposition coming from?**

It is a mix of local residents, environmental campaigners, local authorities and politicians from across the political spectrum. It is a very similar coalition to that which defeated the last Labour Government's proposals for a third runway. It was described by the Daily Telegraph (14/1/09) journalist Iain Martin like this: "the coalition assembled outside Parliament is extraordinarily wide. It runs from radical eco-warriors to middle-class mothers in west London, hedge fund managers in Richmond, to pensioners and parents in Brentford."

### **20. What happens next?**

Shortly after the May General Election the Airports Commission will submit its report to the new Government. However, whatever the Commission recommends, it is not binding on the Government. At present, the Greens and UKIP are opposed to a new runway at Heathrow. So are the Liberal Democrats but they are part of the Coalition which set up the Commission and it is unclear if the third runway is a 'red line' issue for them should they be in coalition after the election. Both Labour and the Conservatives are saying they want to wait to see what the Airports Commission says before making up their minds.

**This briefing has been written by John Stewart and published by HACAN. We can be contacted on [info@hacan.org.uk](mailto:info@hacan.org.uk); tel 020 7737 6641; [www.hacan.org.uk](http://www.hacan.org.uk)**