Aviation 2050: The future of UK aviation – key points

On December 17th the Government published its **Green Paper** with proposals for its new aviation strategy which it will finalise and release in the second half of 2019. It is an important document. It sets out proposals for UK aviation policy until 2050.

There will be a **16 week consultation** ending on **11th April 2019**
Link to the full paper: https://aviationstrategy.campaign.gov.uk

There's also a **NATS paper** on the new type of flight paths being introduced:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/763085/nats-caa-feasibility-airspace-modernisation.pdf

And **a CAA paper** on past and future noise levels:
http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201731%20Aviation%20Strategy%20Noise%20Forecast%20and%20Analyses.pdf

In summary:

The Green Paper sets out to cater for the significant growth in flying it predicts will take place in the UK and around the world. The Government predicts passenger numbers in the UK will grow from 284 million in 2017 to 435 million by 2050. (worldwide, passenger numbers are expected to increase from 4 billion in 2017 to 8.2 billion in 2037, with the biggest increase being in the Asia-Pacific region). The Government argues that, if the UK is able to take advantage of this growth, it will boost the economy.

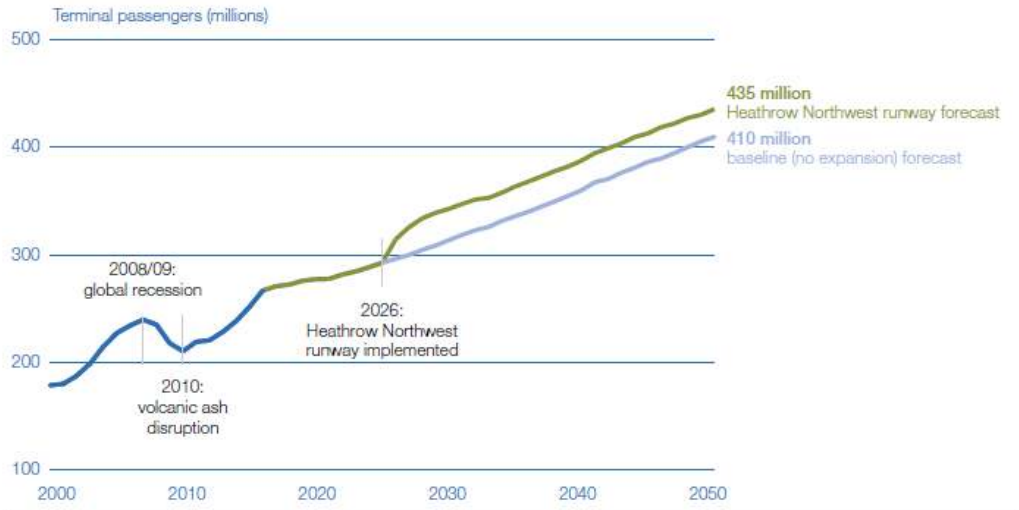

Figure 5 Trends in passenger numbers at UK airports and forecast to 2050
Source: Department for Transport analysis of Civil Aviation Authority: Airport Data, Department for Transport (2017): UK aviation forecasts

It argues that this growth can take place without exceeding the UK's aviation climate targets. It wants to set out a "long term vision and pathway for addressing UK aviation's impact on climate change" which will be kept under review to take account of technological developments, improved operational efficiencies, market-based measures, sustainable fuels as well as demand management and behavioural change and "to negotiate in ICAO (the UN body responsible for tackling international aviation climate emissions) for a long term goal for international aviation that is

consistent with the temperature goals of the Paris Agreement" and it pledges to "to support and strengthen the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation (CORSIA)."

It assumes a third runway will be built at Heathrow

It contains some welcome noise proposals that campaigners have been lobbying for over many years:

- a new **national noise indicator** to track the long term performance of the aviation sector in reducing noise
- **noise caps** to become routine at airports where planning permission is given for growth
- all major airports where there is no cap to draw up **a noise reduction plan**
- the introduction of **multiple flight paths** to provide **respite** but the decision will be down to individual airports
- to reduce the current point where **noise insulation** has to be offered from the 63dB LAeq 16hr contour to the 60dB LAeq 16hr contour
- to require all airports to **review** the effectiveness of **existing compensation schemes**
- the government or the new noise commission to issue new guidance to airports on **best practice for noise insulation schemes**, to improve consistency
- for airspace changes which lead to significantly increased flights overhead, **a new minimum threshold** of an increase of 3dB LAeq is introduced to be eligible for compensation
- provide **more information** to people moving into an area under a flight path
- promote **best practice in operating procedures**; give the CAA the duty to require information on the practices used;
- introduce a new power to **direct airports to publish information**, such as league tables of airline noise performance
- create minimum standards for **noise monitoring** around airports

The CAA study published -
http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201731%20Aviation%20Strategy%20Noise%20Forecast%20and%20Analyses.pdf
- expects noise levels to continue to fall even with the proposed growth.

However, very importantly, and perhaps officially for the first time, "the Government recognises that statistics showing past and future improvements in noise do not necessarily match the experience of some people living under flight paths, for whom **the benefits of quieter aircraft can be cancelled out by greater frequency of movements or the effects of concentrated traffic** associated with more accurate navigation technology".

New types of flight paths

Alongside the Green Paper the Government published **the major report it had commissioned from NATS** which assessed the flight path changes that would be needed as the UK joins the rest of the world in moving from a ground-based system to guide planes in and out of airports to a satellite-based system:

The new satellite-based system allows for aircraft to be guided along more precise flight paths. This is expected to allow airlines to save fuel and cut climate change emissions, to increase the capacity and improve the resilience of airports.

There will be big changes to flight paths, with new ones introduced. It is worth reading the text in the diagram below which sets out **the options**. The satellite system will not allow for the dispersal of flights which some areas currently have. The **only options** will be precise, concentrated flights without respite or the creation of a number of these flight paths so respite is possible.

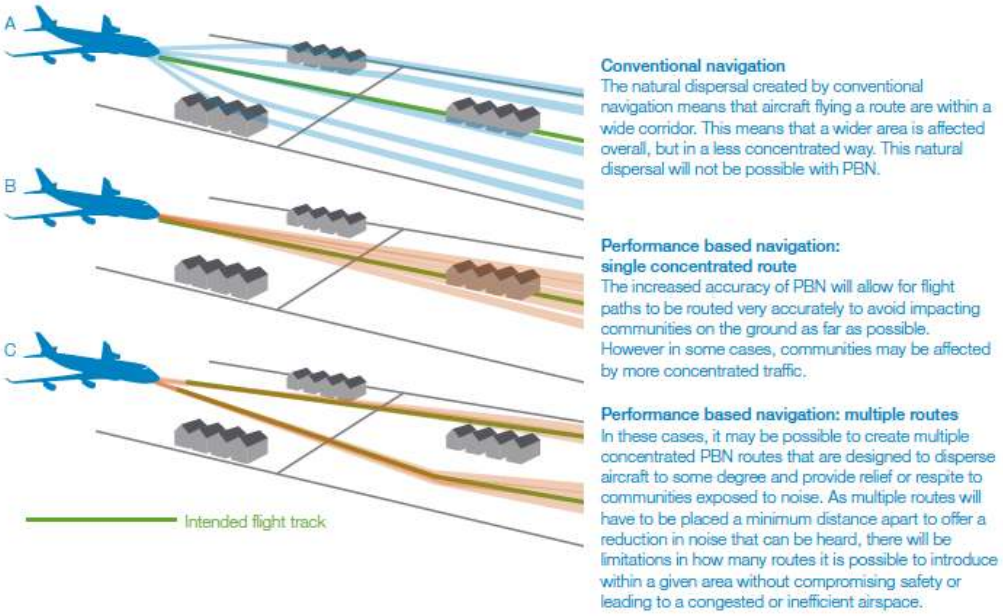

Figure 10 Potential effect of performance based navigation
Source: UK Airport Policy: A framework for balance decisions on the design and use of airspace

HACAN view: There are many proposals in the noise section to be welcomed. The big test will be whether or not the proposed growth in flight numbers will cancel out many of benefits that they bring. On flight paths, our long-standing view is that, unless respite can become the norm, a lot of communities will lose out from the route changes.

On air pollution, the government says it "recognises the need to take further action to ensure aviation's contribution to local air quality issues is properly understood and addressed" and proposes to "improve the monitoring of air pollution, including ultrafine particles (UFP), in order to improve understanding of aviation's impact on local air quality" and to "require all major airports to develop air quality plans to manage emissions within local air quality targets. This will be achieved through establishing minimum criteria to be included in the plans."

Written by HACAN chair John Stewart **17th December 2016**