

To whom it may concern,

Rather than either building a new airport or expanding Heathrow, the principle of 'connectivity' would suggest connecting all the existing facilities in order to create one virtualised airport service for London.

How can this be implemented?

When a plane lands and turns off the runway, it would be met by a dedicated shuttle train. The passengers would step off the plane, through a connector and on to the train at the same horizontal level.

In the same time that it takes passengers today to walk through to arrivals, the shuttle train can whisk them right into the heart of London, which is where a significant proportion of business travellers wish to be.

Other passengers need to connect with onward flights. This could be accomplished with Smart Seat technology. The shuttle train would arrive at a transfer hub. The seats would then remove themselves from the train and take passengers to holding and transfer areas. Shuttle trains would be progressively assembled with the complement of passengers for each particular flight. The shuttle will then speed the passengers directly to the pre-runway area for departure.

Other passengers can be routed to a variety of new Terminals in and around London depending on their ultimate destination. There would be more ground transportation incorporated into the airport system, but the overall journey of the passengers is made more efficient because they were going to make these journeys anyway, outside the airport system, by bus, train or car.

What about immigration and security? This is conceptualised as a progressive reduction of risk. Immigration commences as soon as the passenger enters the shuttle train, when he scans his passport into the smart seat. CCTV also enables immigration and security do a first observation. Immigration and security facilities are then available at the transfer hubs. Of course the shuttle trains would need to run in a sealed environment, possibly underground, in order to make this practical.

The beauty of a virtualised airport is that it is very flexible. Planes can land at any available runway. All the infrastructure of passenger handling is separated from the physical location of the airport, so that extra capacity can be added much more easily.

Passengers can check in at conventional railway stations, or by using their smart phones, and at the new Terminals in and around the Capital. The passenger experience would be smooth and reliable and avoid uncomfortable crowding.

Existing IT and communication technology is well capable of accommodating all this functionality with suitable configuration.

The burden of planning regulations for this scheme would be minimised, which means that it could be started straight away and be up and running within a foreseeable time-scale. The money saved in this way could pay for the required investment in the smart seat technology.

Regards