

Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership response to the open consultation on Aviation capacity in the UK: emerging thinking

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP welcomes Sir Howard Davies' provisional conclusion (7 October 2013) that "we will need some net additional runway capacity in the south east of England in the coming decades".

This coincides with the experiences of businesses who tell us that international air connectivity is a key locational advantage for Thames Valley Berkshire. They say that they need to be able to fly as easily to Brazil, Russia, India, China and other emerging economic markets as they can to Europe, USA and other established destinations. We welcome Sir Howard's conclusion that, "there is no doubt that there is a strong statistical link between the countries we are connected to and the countries we trade with. As new trade links grow, new air links will be needed to support them, and vice versa."

The "Do Nothing" option for Heathrow alone would lead to a gradual economic decline in the Western Wedge economy. Please click [here](#) for the link to the study, researched by Regeneris.

Thames Valley Berkshire LEP also welcomes Sir Howard's re-statement of the brief of the Airports Commission, "The remit we were given requires us to make recommendations on how to maintain the UK's position as a hub for international air traffic". We identify proximity to a world-class international hub airport as the single most important factor in making our economy a net-contributor to the Treasury, and the strongest economy outside London. Any stand-still in UK's air-connectivity, let alone diminution, will be detrimental to our economy. Therefore we endorse Sir Howard's statement that, "A trading nation like the UK must maintain strong air links with its most important markets today, and in the future. That is especially true of an economy which depends heavily on the service sector, which is strongly influenced by the need for face to face contact."

Not only is London Heathrow a world-class international hub airport, but it is also operating at or near capacity. We accept the upside of this excellent connectivity, as well as the downside of delays when events conspire to disrupt the planned operations. The Regeneris study referred to above provides evidence of the potential economic impact for the Western Wedge economy of doing nothing at Heathrow. It describes the potential benefit of expansion, and contrasts this with severe potential impact of a decision to develop a new hub airport to the east of London, which would inevitably lead to the closure of Heathrow. It also offers evidence of securing reductions in the operational impact of Heathrow, such as noise pollution and air quality, whilst expanding capacity. We have submitted this evidence to the Commission.