Review on Inner Estuary Airport (IEA)

Summary & General Notes

The reports submitted provided a very detailed, but conservative focus on the localized effects of the IEA.

What is missing from these set of reports is the following : -

Aviation Markey Growth :-
is an assessment that with an increased aviation market, to 2033 , as indicated by Boeing and Airbus predicted aircraft sales, (Boeing with 36,770 new aircraft, and Airbus for 29,220 new aircraft), can Heathrow or Gatwick , be developed into the 4 runway (or more) Hub that the UK needs as future markets and destinations develop and mature ?

What's the alternative to the IEA ?
There are few options left in developing a site of such a scale to meet this need within a 30-60 min travel time of Central London. The IEA maybe the only site left in the South East where this can be done, to provide a 4 runway operation that also can be adaptable to meet future needs, despite the current challenges of the site, which have been examined in detail within the reports.

We know that neither Heathrow or Gatwick can't be developed into a Hub the size of IEA., and the IEA will have the space to develop even bigger if needed.

Are the problems really that big ?
Much has been said of the remoteness of the IEA site. In practical terms, the IEA is 14 Miles from the UK Motorway Network (M2) and the same distance from HS1, with its direct link to Kings Cross, and 35 miles from Central London. That is hardly remote and the surface access challenges not impossible to overcome.

The challenges of developing the IEA site must be placed in context of other projects that have been undertaken worldwide i.e. Hong Kong International airport. When viewed in this light we can see that developing the IEA isn't insurmountable and certainly doable using proven and existing engineering methods.

SS Richard Montgomery
One estimate for the SS Montgomery site to be made safe in 2013 was £30M. Why wasn't this picked up, and are there any alternative costings?

What are the economic costs of Small Airports in the South East
We need to look again at costs and the block on economic development that some of smaller airports have their local areas and the amount of airspace they take up. If we take the case of Southend and London City, then there is a case for better land use rather than aviation, and their closure would mean that airspace issues for the IEA would be avoided, while at the same time provide land for industrial and housing needs (Southend) and in the case of London City (Commercial and Housing). Again this was an opportunity lost in the reports as the IEA raises these important questions regarding these smaller South East airports.

Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Study 1: Environmental Impacts

Manmade Wetlands

It would have been useful for the report to provide case studies of where manmade wetland habitats have been recreated. An example which is local to me is the Thames Flood Relief scheme or The **Jubilee Riverw** which is a hydraulic channel in southern England. It is 11.6 km (7.2 mi) long[1] and is on average 45 meters (148 feet) wide being one which has created a successful habitat in terms of quality and wildlife as good or better than the stretch of Thames from Maidenhead to Windsor it is designed to divert flood water.

When the study gave a figure of £70,000 - £100,000 per ha for compensation, it would be useful to state which previous projects this was based on and it would have been useful to have projects as case studies in the report.

The study gave an impression that recreating manmade wetland habitat is new and untested, but clearly this can be done successfully, using proven methods and technology.

Greenfield Sites Saved from Development

It is also worth noting that the IEA will open up and create economic development in the wider South East , much of it on brownfield sites, thus saving 1000's of ha of development for commercial and housing development which would otherwise take place within the wider greenbelt and green spaces in London & South East. No estimation of this was made within the report, to balance the local impact on the Isle of Grain. This would have been useful to know and have included in the report.

West London Heathrow Environmental Effects

The report also failed to mention the current the current environmental impact West London and Thames Valley, i.e. 750,000 under the current Heathrow flight path and 200,000 under the London City Flight path, and that the IEA would greatly assist in redressing the balance for these communities.

At the moment Heathrow is paying for [1]soundproof huts in children playgrounds in schools near to the airport. What does that say about the values of our society ?

the environment benefits the IEA could bring for the wider South East should have been explored more in detail, as well detailing as the localised effects on the Isle of Grain Site.

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[1] **Heathrow pays £1.8m for adobe huts to protect pupils' ears from aircraft noise .**
Superadobe domes designed for the moon cut jet noise at school where one flies 180 metres over every 90 seconds

Gwyn Topham, Transport correspondent The Guardian, Friday 8 November 2013 18.38 GMT

Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Study 2:

Review Of The Evidence On Socioeconomic Impacts

IEA and current land use of current Airport Sites

One question that wasn't addressed fully was that of land use . . The South East which is crying out for suitable land and housing and commercial uses, , is London served by having a network of airfields around it that are not operating at full potential, but cannot be fully developed to meet increasing demand due to nearby urban areas. i.e Heathrow, London City and Southend airport sites being examples of this. .

The role of the IEA role as an enabler in consolidation of these smaller airport sites I feel wasn't fully explored. An assessment should to be done regarding if smaller airports around London could be much better used redeveloped not as airport but for other land uses for both the economic and social good for their local communities and the UK as a whole, and as also freeing up airspace in the South East.

Case Study London City Airport

The following extract is taken from a press release from the New Economics Foundation regarding the **London City Airport**., but this Question could also be asked of Southend Airport.

The following information was taken from a report by the New Economics Foundation (NEF) . NEF makes the case for closing London's City Airport and redeveloping the site to create jobs, boost local business and build new homes:

- **City Airport creates little value** – despite occupying 500,000 square meters at the heart of London, its direct contribution to the UK economy in 2011 was £110m – less than a fifth of the nearby ExCeL Exhibition and Conference Centre.

- **City Airport costs jobs** – the airport has never delivered on initial jobs promises and its safety crash zone limits business development across a 3 mile radius. The extra 1500 jobs from current plans to expand City Airport compare poorly with the 9,000 jobs expected to result from the nearby Silvertown Quays development.

- **London transport no longer needs City Airport** – City Airport's passengers account for just 2.4% of London's total flight demand, and its numbers could be readily absorbed by Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted By 2019 Crossrail will allow City workers to reach Heathrow in just 30 minutes. " Taken from NEF 24.7.2014

None of the above has been included in any of the IEA reports. This information should have been included as part of a wider assessment of the IEA scheme, and taken in the wider context reduce the barriers to the IEA site.

Future Civil Aviation Market Growth not addressed Fully.

The report really addressed how the IEA would fit into the aviation market today rather than in 2033 or 2050.

Both Airbus and Boeing expect the civil aviation market to double based on their predicted sales figures for 2014-2033, Boeing with 36,770 new aircraft, of this 21,270 for fleet growth, and Airbus for 29,220 new aircraft, meaning much more traffic and many more destinations to serve, which neither Heathrow or Gatwick can meet this need.

Assuming Boeing and Airbus are right, the question that needs to be asked is that is the assumption in the report that Heathrow needs to close for a successful IEA, but in light of a predicted doubling of the aviation market what are the imprecations of this

Does this mean that the avaition market both in terms of size and destinations needing to be served, means that both Heathrow and IEA are required for capacity to meet predicted growth for 2030 onwards ?

If the market could support both Heathrow and IEA, how would they operate together ?

- A reconfigured Heathrow functioning as the London City Airport does today and IEA operating as the main London Hub or
- 2 Hub model, but with Heathrow serving the Americas and IEA serving Asia and Africa, Oceania connected by High speed rail via a modified crossrail and HS1 via Kings Cross.

If both Heathrow and IEA can exist together then this reduces the costs of the IEA by not needing to compensate the owners of Heathrow for closure costs, and reduces any economic impacts on West London Thames Valley.

Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Study 3: Operational Feasibility & Attitudes To Moving To An Estuary Airport

London City Airport

One of the questions addressed within this report was the effect of closing London City and Southend, but the reported didn't include what economic benefits the closure could provide and how they would directly effect the IEA proposal i.e. impact on Flight paths, opening up land for housing etc. which taken together make the IEA more viable and reduce the barriers to the scheme.

Grain LNG & Fuel Piplines

The implication of the Report was that no other site in the UK could be found for the LNG plant, however options could be developed to house the Storage Tanks to another part of Grain or further down the Kent coast away from the IEA site such as the Isle of Sheppey with the LNG transferred from the existing port facilities via extension of the existing pipeline infrastructure, not of this was suitable explored.

No mention of [2]OPA Aviation Fuel pipelines to the Isle of Grain site. This information was also missing from the report. Is there an aviation fuel pipeline to the site ?. I understand there is.

Environmental Impacts

Regarding the environmental impacts of the Surface Access infrastructure no mention in the report of use of cut and cover tunnelling techniques to misuse sound disturbance on surrounding urban centres or as part of reducing their environmental impact on SSSI sites.

[2] OPA Oil pipeline agency

SS Richard Montgomery

Evidence that wasn't included in this report is views from experienced personnel in bomb disposal. This information I got from the Kent Online Website, with an interview with Michael Fellows.

" The bill for making the sunken warship SS Richard Montgomery safe could be as high as £30million, a bomb disposal expert has revealed.

Michael Fellows said dealing with the thousands of tonnes of explosives onboard the US vessel was perfectly feasible, but it would come at a cost.

It is Mr Fellows' job to remove such obstacles, and he said dealing with the Montgomery was perfectly realistic. The 73-year-old, who has been involved in munitions disposal for more than 50 years, said: "It's not something new, it has been done. There are people that specialise in it."

The former Royal Navy diver set up Fellows International in the 1990s and since then the company has worked across the world, from Northern Ireland to Iraq.

During his time in the Navy he led the teams that de-ammunitioned three ships – HMS Drake, Natal and Vanguard.

He said the technology is there to tackle the Montgomery, but a "proper" survey needs to be carried out, one which examined whether the munitions were still a threat.

The Maritime Coastguard Agency checks the condition of the wreck each year, but Mr Fellows said this was meaningless without information on the potency of the bombs.

The "proper" survey advocated by Mr Fellows would take a couple of months and involve taking samples from the water and analysing the content using a remote operated vehicle the size of a shoe box.

This could cost a few million pounds, Mr Fellows said. As for the operation to make the ship safe, a remote operated vehicle could cut down into the ship, remove the weapons and take them to an ammunition dumping ground, Mr Fellows said.

A blast protection wall four or five metres above the high water mark would be built on the shore, "just in case".

In all, the operation could take around 18 months."

Why wasn't direct evidence from skilled personnel included in the report ?

Inner Thames Estuary Feasibility Study 4: Surface Access Impacts

As London population grows, and the Thames Gateway takes the majority of this growth, it would have been useful for the report to state how much infrastructure would be needed is any case as part of this organic growth, as we know the UK is desperately short of infrastructure and has been underperforming in the area for many years

Can the IEA be argued that it is simply highlighting infrastructure issues in East London and the wider South East that will need carrying out upto the 2030 timeline regardless of the IEA scheme, especially the road improvements highlighted in the report and the need for a lower Thames crossing to help in economic regeneration of North Kent and Essex. These projects can be argued would be needed even without the IEA project.

This would help put the £27 bn infrastructure bill in context.