

The Airports Commission's Work

The aviation sector is vital to the UK's economy. In 2014, it contributed around £20 billion to the economy and approximately 230,000 people were employed by the industry.

A strong UK aviation sector supports the growth of other key areas of the economy such as financial and business services, creative industries, and tourism and leisure.

Heathrow and Gatwick are the UK's biggest airports and are the busiest two and one-runway airports in the world respectively. London's airports service more routes than those of any other European city. The UK has the third largest aviation network in the world.

The Coalition Government established the independent Airports Commission in November 2012 to identify and recommend options to maintain the UK's status as Europe's most important aviation hub. In December 2013, the Airports Commission published its interim report, concluding that there was a need for one additional runway to be in operation in the south east of England by 2030.

The Airports Commission also considered alternatives to runway capacity expansion, but concluded that these options were more costly and would not provide the required increase in capacity.

The Airports Commission shortlisted three schemes for further analysis: a second runway at Gatwick Airport; a northwest runway at Heathrow Airport; and an extended northern runway at Heathrow Airport. It dismissed a new Thames Estuary hub airport. Each scheme was examined in detail to consider its social, economic and environmental impacts, as well as suitable measures to mitigate these impacts.

In July 2015, the Airports Commission published its final report and recommended that the Heathrow Northwest Runway scheme, combined with a suitable package of measures to mitigate the impacts of the scheme on the environment and affected communities, offered the greatest overall benefits from expansion.



The National Need for a New Runway

The UK faces a significant capacity challenge if it is to maintain its status as Europe's most important aviation hub.

Despite the strength of the UK aviation sector, we now face a capacity challenge. Heathrow Airport, the main hub airport of the UK, is already operating at full capacity. London's airports are filling up fast and will all be full by 2040.

The UK's hub status is already being challenged by hub airports in Europe and the Middle East, all of

which have spare capacity and are able to attract new flights to growth markets.

Doing nothing to address capacity issues will have detrimental effects on the UK economy. International connectivity from the UK will be restricted, and domestic connectivity into the largest London airports will decline. Costs will also be imposed on passengers and citizens directly via fare increases and delays, and indirectly through increased costs to the wider economy.

In December 2015, the Government accepted the Airports Commission's recommendation on the need for a new runway in the south east of England by 2030. The Government's policy is set out in chapter 2 of the draft Airports National Policy Statement.



The Government's Decision on a Preferred Scheme

On 25 October 2016, the Government announced that the Heathrow Northwest Runway is its preferred scheme to increase airport capacity in the South East.

Before this announcement, the Government carried out detailed analysis of the Airports Commission's work, including its environmental assessments, and met all three shortlisted scheme promoters to understand the details of their plans and to develop the best possible supporting measures to mitigate the impacts of expansion on affected communities.

The Government is confident that the Heathrow Northwest Runway scheme can deliver significant economic benefits to the UK and maintain its status as a world-leading hub airport. The key reasons for this are:

- By 2040 a Northwest Runway at Heathrow could result in 125,000 additional flights per year across the UK (compared to 54,000 additional flights with a Gatwick second runway), including 39,000 long-haul flights, and 27 million more passengers per year;
- Heathrow Airport's freight handling operations are currently around 20 times more by tonnage to all countries and 200 times more by value to non-EU countries than Gatwick Airport's. Heathrow Airport is also well placed to link its freight operations to the UK's road and rail networks;
- The Heathrow Northwest Runway scheme is expected to generate tens of thousands more jobs at the airport by 2030, through its supply chain and in the local community;

- Heathrow Airport proposes to increase its domestic routes, spreading benefits right across the country;
- Heathrow Airport's proposed measures to reduce the impact of airport noise offer planned periods of relief for local communities through runway alternation and a six-and-a-half-hour ban on scheduled night flights; and
- Heathrow Airport has the advantage of a wide range of road and rail links, which will increase further with the Elizabeth line (Crossrail) and HS2 connections at Old Oak Common.

The Government's draft Airports National Policy Statement sets out why the Government believes that a Northwest Runway at Heathrow Airport is the most effective and appropriate way to meet the UK's need for a new runway. The draft Airports National Policy Statement and its supporting documents, including an Appraisal of Sustainability, have now been published for public consultation.

