

RICHMOND HEATHROW CAMPAIGN

Airports Commission
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28 February 2013

Dear Sir/Madam,

AIRPORT CAPACITY IN THE LONGER TERM

Please find attached to this letter an expression of intent by the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC) in developing proposals for longer term airport capacity and connectivity. We wish to explore the options for increasing the number of passengers per aircraft movement as an alternative to simply increasing the number of aircraft movements.

If our ideas are viable, we believe that they would be less controversial and less costly than the development of additional runways, at Heathrow or elsewhere in the London area. Moreover, if the market is sent the right signals, increasing the number of passengers per movement could be introduced incrementally and could begin within a very short timescale, compared with the much longer timescales and significant up-front costs and risks for additional runway development. For these reasons our ideas may also be a more attractive solution politically than the problems of runway development.

We hope to respond to the other consultation deadlines that the Airports Commission has announced. We would also welcome the opportunity for a meeting with the Airports Commission to discuss: (a) the impact of air traffic noise; and (b) the tension between on the one hand encouraging maximum competition within air transport and on the other hand the risk of capacity over-supply in order to meet the conditions for perfect competition.

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Airports Commission Guidance Document 01: Submitting Evidence and Proposals to the Airports Commission

AIRPORT CAPACITY IN THE LONGER TERM

EXPRESSION OF INTENT BY THE RICHMOND HEATHROW CAMPAIGN IN DEVELOPING PROPOSALS

February 2013

Introduction

This submission is made in response to the open invitation in the Airports Commission Guidance Document 01 that parties with an interest in developing proposals for the provision of additional airport capacity in the longer term should notify the Airports Commission.

The Richmond Heathrow Campaign represents three amenity groups in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames: The Richmond Society, The Friends of Richmond Green and The Kew Society, which together have over 2 000 members. We liaise with other community groups within the Borough and with HACAN. We have developed close working relations with Richmond Council and with our Member of Parliament. We are part of the Big Society.

The members of our amenity groups are adversely affected by noise from Heathrow's flight paths, particularly in the night period. We favour a ban on scheduled air traffic in the night period at Heathrow. We are opposed to the introduction of mixed mode on the existing runways at Heathrow in the short term; and to the development of additional runways at Heathrow in the longer term.

We nevertheless recognise the importance of air transport for London; and the need to make provision for handling the forecast increase in air passenger numbers. We have therefore sought to make a positive contribution in our responses to consultations by the Government and inquiries by others concerning the short, medium and longer term airport capacity options in the London area. We now wish to make a positive contribution to the Airport Commission's work in identifying options for airport capacity and connectivity in the longer term.

Background

There is a general consensus that the number of passengers at UK airports will increase significantly over the coming decades. The projected growth rates could be reduced if aviation were taxed at a fairer level so that passenger demand did not continue to be stimulated by the sector's favourable tax treatment (particularly among non-business passengers who are significantly more numerous and price sensitive than business passengers). But even with fair taxation, we accept that it is likely that passenger numbers will continue to grow, albeit more slowly.

There are four options for handling the additional passenger numbers:

- More intensive use of existing runways in order to accommodate a large increase in the number of aircraft movements, with only a limited increase in the number of passengers per movement.
- Additional runways in order to accommodate a large increase in the number of aircraft movements, with only a limited increase in the number of passengers per movement.
- Increase the number of passengers per movement relative to the existing number of seats across the air fleet, with only a limited increase in the number of movements.
- Increase the average number of seats per aircraft across the air fleet in order to handle more passengers per movement, with only a limited increase in the number of movements.

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The public debate about long term passenger capacity has been dominated thus far by preferences for the second option - additional runways, and where they might be located; with the first option - more intensive use of existing runways - favoured only for meeting short and medium term capacity needs. Both of these options depend on a substantial increase in the number of aircraft movements in order to justify the up-front investment. Perhaps as a consequence, there has been little debate about increasing the number of passengers per movement as an alternative strategy to increasing the number of movements.

We consider that it is time for the options for increasing the number of passengers per movement - at Heathrow and at London's other main airports (Gatwick, Stansted, Luton and London City) - to be given equal consideration.

Work Summary

In preparing our responses in the last two years to consultations by the Department for Transport on airport capacity and to calls from others for evidence on airport capacity (e.g. the Independent Transport Commission, the House of Commons Select Committee on Transport and the Greater London Assembly Transport Committee) we have done a considerable amount of research based primarily on: (a) the report from the Heathrow Terminal Five Public Inquiry; (b) the Civil Aviation Authority's airport statistics and passenger surveys; (c) Airports Co-ordination Limited's reports on slot allocation and route scheduling at Heathrow; (d) the websites at Heathrow and other airports. We have also had meetings to discuss our findings and seek further evidence with the Department for Transport, Heathrow Airport, the Civil Aviation Authority, the National Air Traffic Services and Airports Co-ordination Limited.

Much of this earlier work will feed into our detailed submission to the Airports Commission, supplemented by additional data and analysis. The focus of our earlier work was on capacity needs over the next fifteen years at Heathrow. No-one has disputed our analysis that more passengers per movement at Heathrow would meet demand over that period. We therefore wish to develop our arguments beyond fifteen years. For example, Heathrow by itself will have difficulty handling the rising passenger demand beyond that period, even with increased passengers per movement. But the principle of more passengers per movement at Heathrow could be extended to London's other main airports. It is also likely that we shall critique the hub model at Heathrow, in favour of more direct services and less emphasis on attracting an ever-larger number of transfer passengers to satisfy London's longer term connectivity needs.

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