

# Heathrow Terminal 5 + Runway 3 – a chronology of worthless promises

**This briefing offers a chronological summary of broken promises by BAA and others over the expansion of Heathrow airport, 1993 – 2015**

**1993**

RUCATSE, a study into Runway Capacity in South East England, says another runway will be needed in the South East by 2005. Various options explored include a runway to the north of the existing boundary of Heathrow. This would mean the destruction of 4,000 houses, a church and one of the finest tithe barns in the country.

**1994**

BAA plc, which was a member of the RUCATSE study, distances itself from the report: "We must stress that this company is not planning or proposing to build a third runway at Heathrow. The airport requires extra terminal capacity, rather than runway capacity." (Uxbridge Informer, 25 March 1994)

Hillingdon Council allows BA to build its new headquarters on Harmondsworth Moor (on Prospect Park, now known as Waterside). The Council does not allow general development on this Green Belt land. This means that if the land is wanted for a new runway, only BA's HQ will have to be moved.

**1995**

Friends of the Earth and other groups start giving evidence to the Terminal 5 (T5) Public Inquiry, showing that T5 will lead to and is a Trojan horse for a third runway. They produce a map showing the likely location of a short runway. This is north of the airport, between the A4 and the M4, and would minimise demolition of property.

The evidence is not challenged by BAA, BA or the Government.

BAA mounts a PR campaign denying there will be a third runway. Sir John Egan, BAA's Chief Executive writes to residents in surrounding boroughs and says "T5 does not call for a third runway" (BAA’s *'Dear neighbour'* letter to residents in a wide area around Heathrow; 16 May 1995).

Inside the T5 Inquiry BAA says something different: "We could not rule out the option of considering Heathrow when another runway is required...We could not give a guarantee about seeking further expansion" (Michael Maine, BAA's Technical Director).

The T5 inspector says "I am not sure that we have received evidence of that nature...it does not hit you forcibly that it (ruling out more runways) is said with total certainty" (Inspector Vandermeer, QC, November 1995, during the cross examination of Alison Munroe, a Department of Transport witness).

**1997**

BAA continues to proclaim that runway capacity is not an issue. In a public newsletter it suggests that the inquiry hearings had put to rest concerns raised by Friends of the Earth that T5 was a Trojan horse for a third runway: "...some legitimate fears have been put to rest. We now know for example that there will be no third runway at Heathrow - a widespread concern before the inquiry started" ('Heathrow News, Produced For Local Residents by BAA Heathrow', May 1997).

BAA also claims that runway capacity at Heathrow was not a problem: "The problem at Heathrow is not the lack of runway capacity but shortage of terminal space…The inevitable overcrowding until T5 is build is likely to cause…problems…". (BAA News Release - BAA warn of potential "national crisis..", 12 October 1997)

Labour win the 1997 General Election; BAA is an early visitor to John Prescott the new transport secretary at the then DETR, lobbying on T5 and aviation growth generally.

**1998**

The Government effectively admits that is has already decided on T5, by announcing the widening of the M25 where BAA's spur road into T5 needs to be connected. "The only sour note (in the Roads Review) lies in the decision to approve the widening of the M25 between Junctions 12 and 15. All other such plans have been scrapped. But the Government has decided that with Terminal 5 at Heathrow due to open in future, the M25 needs this extra space." (Daily Express, 1 August 1998)

**1999**

BAA continues to say it does not want a third runway: "…Additional runway ruled out forever whether T5 is approved or not" (BAA press conference, 12 March 1999).

In another *'Dear Neighbour'* letter to residents (April 1999) Sir John Egan writes:

"We have since repeated often that we do not want, nor shall we seek, an additional runway. I can now report that we went even further at the Inquiry and called on the Inspector to recommend that, subject to permission being given for T5, an additional Heathrow runway should be ruled out forever…

“We said: 'it is the company's view that the local communities around Heathrow should be given assurances…BAA would urge the Government to rule out any additional runway at Heathrow, and BAA would support a recommendation by the Inquiry Inspector in his report that the Government should rule it out. Indeed BAA invites the Inspector to make such a recommendation.'"

BAA then goes a step further, not just saying that T5 does not "call" for another runway, but that it will not "lead" to another runway:

"Our position could not be clearer, nor could it be more formally placed upon the record. T5 will not lead to a 'third' runway."

Friends of the Earth continue to regard BAA’s claims as worthless promises. The Terminal 5 inquiry nears its end with BAA-backed community groups criticising Friends of the Earth for misleading the public about T5 leading to a third runway.

**2001**

Rod Eddington, Chief Executive of British Airways (BA) call for a third runway: "Mr Eddington insisted that it was essential that Heathrow had a third runway as well as a fifth terminal…" (Daily Mail, 5 January 2001 - reporting on a speech to a business conference on 4 January)

But Mr Eddington changes his line when speaking to local residents: "BA is not pushing for a third runway at Heathrow…" (Ealing Times, 1 February 2001).

BAA echoes BA's denial and says it is not pushing for a third runway at Heathrow. "It is the company's view that the local communities around Heathrow should be give (sic) assurances. BAA would urge the government to rule out any additional runway at Heathrow."

In November 2001, having sat on the Inspector Vandermeer's report for almost a year, the Government announces its decision on T5 and releases the inspector's report. The inspector says that a third runway could have "unacceptable environmental consequences". He recommends a cap on the number of flights at 480,000 a year in order to prevent the need for a third runway.

In approving T5 the then transport secretary, Stephen Byers, MP, accepts the cap on flights but refuses to rule out a third runway: " ... the third runway will be considered in the context of both the South East of England study and the Aviation White Paper which we shall publish next year."

Friends of the Earth points out that these two stances are inconsistent. If the cap of 480,000 flights a year is to remain, a third runway is not needed. Friends of the Earth conclude that the Government is already planning to renege on this cap - one of very few meaningful conditions set when granting permission for T5.

**2002**

Just months after the T5 application is approved, lobbying starts for further expansion. "Airport infrastructure will require new development. T5 was just the beginning." (Roger Maskell of the Amicus trade union, speaking on BBC London breakfast radio news, 16 April 2002)

On 23 July, the Government publishes its UK-wide regional air studies including SERAS, the South East and East of England Air Services study. One of the options is a short runway north of Heathrow. This is the location that Friends of the Earth identified at the T5 inquiry 7 years before (see 1995 above).

As part of the announcement, the new Labour Transport Secretary, Alistair Darling, MP, weaves New Labour spin on the 480,000 flights a year cap at Heathrow, saying in effect that the cap will last only until it is broken:

"So the position on terminal 5, and on the cap on the number of flights that was referred to at that time, remains good in relation to Heathrow's current situation (i.e. four terminals and less than 480,000 flights a year).

“Everybody knew that we would look at Heathrow in the context of the other London airports over a longer period." (House of Commons statement, 23 July 2002)

**2003**

On 13 May 2003, BAA plc admits publicly that it wants third runway at Heathrow. In its response to the Government's airport consultation BAA shortlists a third runway at Heathrow and claims that this is part of the company’s approach of ‘responsible growth’.

BAA says that a new runway at Heathrow, Gatwick or Stansted should be decided on promptly and that land should be safeguarded for two more runways. So, even if Heathrow does not get the first new runway, it is likely to get the second or third. This finally proves that BAA was being dishonest and deceitful when it called for a third runway to be ruled out.

The anger of local groups is predictable. Hacan branded it the "mother of all U turns". Friends of the Earth says that BAA's claim to be acting responsibly was "a sick joke". Politicians also condemn it; the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for the Greater London Authority accusing BAA of breaking its promises.

But the comments of the independent press are perhaps most accurate. Planning Magazine says "Even by the dubious ethics of the airline industry, this is lower than a rattlesnake's stomach."

BAA and BA are very concerned that the studies carried out for the airports consultation and Aviation White Paper show that air pollution would be likely to breach standards set by the Government and the EU to protect human health.

They therefore employ the same consultants, AEA, to come up with 'better' results.

AEA is given some more optimistic assumptions and duly shows that only 5,000 instead of 30,000 people would be exposed to air pollution levels in breach of standards.

On 16 December 2003 the Government launches its long-awaited Aviation White Paper. This says quite clearly that Heathrow would have been the preferred location for the next runway in the South East, but for concerns about air pollution. Clearly the lobbying of BAA and BA has paid off.

There is no suggestion that BAA, BA or the Government are concerned about air quality or its effects on people’s health per se. After all, there is already a National Air Quality Strategy (NAQS) which could and should have been invoked. In fact it was completely ignored in the consultation and in the Aviation White Paper.

The only concern is that the European Union (EU) would be likely to impose sanctions if the Government knowingly breached its own and EU standards by deciding on a third runway. Even BAA's and BA's attempts to show that air pollution would be okay, by getting their consultants to re-do the estimates, would not overcome the EU problem for at least the next 10 years.

**2004**

BAA’s Tabitha Stebbings, tells the Heathrow Area Consultative Committee that BAA would seek permission to exceed the annual 480,000 flight limit set by former Secretary of State for Transport Stephen Byers, when approving Terminal 5 Public Inquiry. (Ealing Times, 13 August 2004)

**2007**

On 6 October local people react to plans by BAA for a new 4,000 metre runway, double the length of ‘short’ runway which discussions to that time had involved.

John Stewart, Chairman of HACAN Clearskies, the anti-noise group, said: “The impact locally would be devastating. It would mean hundreds even thousands of homes will be knocked down to make way for this runway. This is just another broken promise from BAA, the residents feel there is no hope, if they are constantly being deceived.” <http://www.uk-airport-news.info/heathrow-airport-news-061007a.htm>

**2008**

At the 22 January London Assembly Environment Committee, Stephen Nelson, then Chief Executive of BAA, would not rule out the need for a 4th runway and 7th terminal:

“The previous CEO of BAA gave assurance that there would not be a case for further expansion. That was 12 years ago. It is very important for me to emphasise looking forward I will not be giving undertakings which in some sense could be considered hostage to fortune in the future. It would be inappropriate for me to speculate on whether there will be a further case for capacity expansion beyond 2030.” <http://www.london.gov.uk/media/assembly-press-releases/2008/01/further-heathrow-expansion-cannot-be-ruled-out>

In January, the inspector who presided over the T5 public inquiry, Roy Vandermeer, gives a TV interview in which he says: "At the moment I have not for my part seen enough to persuade me that I would be altering my recommendations about the third runway, were I doing it now. But that's not to guarantee I wouldn't, but I have not seen the material that would make me convinced that I would change my mind.” (Ealing Times, 1 February 2008)

In November after years of worthless promises, Colin Matthews, BAA’s new Chief Executive, tries again but uses the same BAA tactic of old - bargaining environmental standards for promised runway expansion. He says his company will respect air quality and noise standards and flight numbers set by any new independent body but only if it gets its wish for a third runway.

This ‘promise’ ignores that it is the Government which should set and abide by these environmental standards. Proper control by the Government obviates the need for a new independent body.

On 26 November BAA chief executive Colin Matthews said: “…we understand that we can only increase the number of flights if we can safeguard levels of noise and air quality. By calling on an independent assessor to scrutinise the airport's performance against these limits, we are providing an uncompromising assurance that we will operate Heathrow Airport within the limits laid down by government. If we don't, the number of flights in and out of Heathrow could be capped."

<http://www.cnplus.co.uk/news/baa-wants-independent-assessor-for-heathrow-third-runway/1934713.article#.VPOED-qzUuQ>

Ruth Cadbury, a Labour Party Hounslow Councillor for Brentford, says:

"I think it's a crazy idea given how environmental limits have already been set. I don't have any faith that his statement actually means anything. A third runway means the destruction of hundreds of communities and misery for those living under the flight path.

“Collin Matthews appears to have forgotten past promises that BAA have failed to act upon. If we can't trust him, how can we trust an environmental watch dog?” (Hounslow Chronicle, 26 November 2008)

And Liberal Democrat transport spokesman Norman Baker said: "This is a worthless promise, as BAA has to stick to EU emissions limits anyway. "It is clearly an attempt to get the new runway in place and then to come back demanding more flights at a later date. The last 15 years have been littered with promises of no more expansion, followed by demands for exactly that."

Wandsworth Council leader Edward Lister, speaking on behalf of the 2M Group of councils opposed to Heathrow expansion, said:

"The history of Heathrow is littered with broken promises. Once extra capacity has been agreed, it is used to the full. No-one will believe claims by either BAA or the Government that flights will be cut in the future in the light of environmental concerns. The time for an independent review is now. Given criticisms by the Government's own environmental advisers of the case made by the Department for Transport (DfT) on noise, air quality and surface access, there should be an immediate halt to any expansion proposals while the science is thoroughly checked. EU air quality limits are already being exceeded at Heathrow. If BAA and the DfT seriously want to be trusted on the environment they can start by reducing flights today."

Theresa Villiers, shadow Conservative transport minister at the time said:

“BAA are right to admit that they have lost the trust of Parliamentarians and local communities over the third runway. However today's letter is just the next in a long line of promises which may have been sincere at the time, that were subsequently cast aside by the company. We have seen this all before. What BAA needs to realise is that people do not want a third runway, we do not need a third runway, and under a Conservative Government there will not be a third runway.” For this she was criticised by conservative blogger Ian Dale: <http://iaindale.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/tory-concerns-grow-over-villiers.html> Theresa Villiers was later moved from her role.

**2009**

On 14 January, BAA, Colin Matthews, said that a third runway at Heathrow would "only go ahead if strict environmental limits are met". <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2009/jan/14/aviation-jobs-heathrow-baa>

Then, on 21 October, Conservative Leader of the Opposition, David Cameron, MP, told a meeting at Christ’s School, Richmond that:

“The third runway at Heathrow is not going ahead, no ifs, no buts”. Councillor Nick True, leader of Richmond Conservatives, said: “Everyone there was gripped by David's ability, openness and character.” <http://www.yourlocalguardian.co.uk/news/local/wandsworthnews/4694685.David_Cameron___No_third_runway___no_ifs__no_buts_/>

[](http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/No-ifs-No-buts.png)

 Actual text from Conservative election leaflet for the May 2010 election.               Full leaflet at

<http://www.electionleaflets.org/leaflets/full/b58fa8c95aec5d810bfe2ebb16bcbf91/>

**2010**

On 12 May the BBC reports that the third runway has been cancelled by the new coalition government. John Stewart, Chairman of HACAN Clearskies, said:

“The third runway is dead in the water. Residents under the flight path are delighted and people who stood to lose their homes are relieved. It is also good for London as a whole as it

would have been bad for the environment and it was not essential for the city's economic well-being. I'm absolutely delighted." <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/8678282.stm>

**2012**

On 27 March the Evening Standard columnist, Simon Jenkins wrote about broken promises and industry lobbying:

“Nothing in London politics has been more cynical than the “historic pledges” given by governments to residents around Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick airports. If only they would capitulate and accept giant jets flying over their homes, There will never be any question of further expansion in the future. The congestion and noise pollution associated with major airports in residential areas are now regarded, in most countries, as unacceptable. It is on a par with aluminium smelters, open sewers or squatter camps in parks. We may not make much progress down the road to a tolerable environment but that far we have got.

“The aviation industry once promised to invent engines so quiet that airport noise would be a thing of the past. Planes would be able to take off and land all night. The development of quiet jets stopped when the industry found it cheaper to lobby governments to break promises — or at least to get taxpayers to pay for airports in less-inhabited areas. In London, millions must have been devoted to lobbying successive governments to break the promises of no expansion from their predecessors. The promises at Gatwick and Stansted have so far held. At Heathrow, the pass was sold when a pledge against expansion was broken with the fourth and fifth terminals. Now the lobbies scent victory on another breach at Heathrow.

“As recently as 2010, David Cameron not only swore that there would be no new runway but committed himself to the expensive and unnecessary HS2 train as an alternative sop to the construction lobby. Just two years later we are now told that an “options paper” on London runway capacity has been commissioned. The chancellor, George Osborne, as good as indicated last week that the caveat “all options except a third runway at Heathrow” no longer applied. The spin is that he and Cameron are preparing to break their word.” <http://www.standard.co.uk/comment/comment/londons-airports-and-a-string-of-broken-promises-7592940.html>

**2013**

On 18 December, the Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, told the House of Commons: “We said that there would not be a third runway and we’ve stuck with that promise.” <http://www.standard.co.uk/news/politics/david-cameron-lied-to-londoners-about-blocking-third-runway-9012834.html>

**2014**

On 3 December, Heathrow Airport's CEO has apologised for broken promises that he said have 'hung over the airport's relationship with local communities'.

“John Holland-Kaye made the apology at the Airports Commission's consultation conference today where options for expanding either Heathrow or Gatwick are being discussed. He said he was sorry for the airport's past commitment, made almost 20 years ago, to permanently rule out building a third runway.

He said:

“I am shocked by that commitment. It should never have been made. And it could never be kept. That is not an excuse. It is an apology. I am sorry Heathrow made that commitment. It has hung over the relationship with local communities, and has led to a deficit of trust that can only be repaired by demonstrating we are a different company from the past.”

He went on to address the third runway proposals put forward over the last decade, saying:

“In hindsight, I don’t believe we did enough to listen to the concerns of local communities about that proposal. We should have done more to reduce noise from aircraft, and ensure those people who stood to lose their homes or suffer more aircraft noise were treated fairly. We should have done more to help local people access the jobs that would come from expansion. If there was a sense economic benefits should trump environmental costs, or national benefits should hold sway over local disruption, then I am sorry. We got it wrong.” <http://www.getwestlondon.co.uk/news/local-news/heathrow-airport-boss-apologises-ruling-8219853>

Similarly, on 4 December, the same apology was reported: “Heathrow Airport CEO John Holland-Kaye has apologised for broken promises that he said have ‘hung over the airport’s relationship with local communities’. The CEO made the apology at the Airports Commission’s consultation conference on Wednesday where options for expanding either Heathrow or Gatwick are being discussed. He was sorry for the airport’s past commitment, made almost 20 years ago, to permanently rule out building a third runway. He said “I am shocked by that commitment. It should never have been made. And it could never be kept. That is not an excuse. It is an apology. I am sorry Heathrow made that commitment. It has hung over the relationship with local communities, and has led to a deficit of trust that can only be repaired by demonstrating we are a different company from the past.” <http://www.easirent.com/heathrow-airport-ceo-admits-broken-promises-with-local-communities/>

On 14 December, the same speech was relayed by Nigel Milton, Heathrow’s Director of Policy and Political Relations, to residents at the Heathrow Airport Local Focus Forum: “NM explained that John Holland-Kaye felt it important to apologise for broken promises that BAA had made in the past and to demonstrate that Heathrow now places more importance on listening to the views of everyone. NM clarified that no properties would be purchased until planning permission was granted.” <http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:-Inbi8VsdtAJ:www.heathrowairport.com/static/Heathrow/Downloads/Word/LFF-meeting-minutes-9Dec14.doc+&cd=20&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk>