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Airports Commission publishes interim report with two options for a runway at Heathrow and one at Gatwick. Estuary still being considered

On 17th December the Airports Commission’s Interim Report was finally published. It has put forward 3 options for a new runway, with an option at the Isle of Grain in the Thames Estuary kept open. There would only be one runway, not two initially, and they consider this should be in operation before 2030.

At Heathrow the choices are a north west runway, 3,500 metres long, destroying Harmondsworth; and an extension westwards of at least 3,000 metres, of the existing northern runway (part of the Heathrow Hub plan). The Commission is also considering a wide spaced Gatwick southern runway. The Commission also says “there is likely to be a



North west runway – built over M25 and moves Heathrow closer to Windsor. Cost £17 billion and demolition of 950 homes



The westerly extension of Heathrow’s northern runway (from the “Heathrow Hub” proposal)

challenges surrounding them at this stage. It will undertake further study of the Isle of Grain option in the first half of 2014 and will reach a view later next year on whether that option offers a credible proposal for consideration alongside the other short-listed options.” The report also contains recommendations to the government for immediate action to improve the use of existing runway capacity. Among others, these include better airspace organisation and surface transport improvements such as enhancement of Gatwick station, a rail link from the south to Heathrow, and a rail link between Heathrow and Stansted. <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18917>

demand case for a 2nd additional runway to be operational by 2050.” They claim, making various assumptions, this is “consistent with the Committee of Climate Change’s advice to government on meeting its legislated climate change targets.”

Stansted is ruled out, and on the Thames Estuary they say: “The Commission has not shortlisted any of the Thames Estuary options because there are too many uncertainties and

ILLUSTRATION OF MEDIUM TO WIDE SPACED INDEPENDENT SEGREGATED MODE



The southern Gatwick runway option

Campaigners vow to fight Heathrow expansion

By John Stewart, Chair of HACAN

Somebody said to me when he read the Davies Interim Report: ‘Here we go again.’ And then he added, “A chance to do it again!” At Heathrow we stopped the third runway last time round when the aviation industry suffered one of the biggest reverses in its history:

<http://www.hacan.org.uk/resources/reports/how.the.heathrow.campaign.was.won.pdf>

We relish the chance to do it again.

Heathrow Airport knows it has a mountain to climb. That is why it set up its lobby group, Back Heathrow, a good two years before a decision will be made. It is playing a cleverer, more subtle game this time.

But our view remains: Heathrow expansion is politically undeliverable.

If any government dared to officially back a new runway, it knows it will face what one veteran journalist recently called “the biggest environmental battle in Europe... simply because it is Heathrow.”

The coalition of residents, local authorities, politicians, green groups and environmental activists is still in place. Greenpeace are not frozen in the Arctic. They’ll be back at Heathrow. Plane Stupid have stopped their swimming lessons and are ready to place their feet – and D-locks – back on familiar territory. And new allies are joining us. UKIP has come out firmly against the expansion of Heathrow. The PCS Union is one of several trade unions who now oppose a new runway.

2014 will see the coalition in action once again. Talking to the Commission, but challenging the Government. Persuading, arguing, cajoling, demonstrating. Visible on the streets; working behind the scenes. Knowing that if we win a second time – no, *when* we win a second time – the third runway is probably gone for good, because business won’t hang around forever and will start planning its future on the basis that a two-runway Heathrow is here to stay.

Interim Report documents from the Airports Commission

Airports Commission: interim report

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266446/airports-commission-interim-report.pdf PDF, 4.34MB, 228 pages

Airports Commission: interim report – appendix 1 assessment of short- and medium-term options

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266447/airports-commission-interim-report-appendix-1.pdf PDF, 157KB, 33 pages

Airports Commission: interim report – appendix 2 assessment of long-term options

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266448/airports-commission-interim-report-appendix-2.pdf PDF, 145KB, 38 pages

Airports Commission: interim report – appendix 3 technical appendix

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266449/airports-commission-interim-report-appendix-3.pdf PDF, 1.36MB, 116 pages

Airports Commission announcement at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/airports-commission-publishes-interim-report>

Gatwick at risk - and yet another battle against the runway begins

By Brendon Sewill, Chairman of GACC

The decision by the Airports Commission to narrow the choice of runway location to either Heathrow or Gatwick, deleting Stansted from the short-list, means that suddenly Gatwick finds itself at the centre of attention.

We've had runway battles before, in 1970, in 1993 and again in 2003. But in the latter two we had the partial protection of a 'no new runway' legal agreement – which sadly expires in 2019.

We will now be ramping up our campaign - and for this we can learn a great deal from the experience of Heathrow and Stansted. We are delighted for our friends at SSE (Stop Stansted Expansion) - their reprieve shows that persistent opposition can win in the end.

We are encouraged and invigorated by the support for our fight that we have already received from other AirportWatch member organisations.

One thing we won't be doing is to suggest that a new runway should be at Heathrow or in the now sinking Thames estuary. Nor will we be seeking to reinstate Stansted. GACC is a fully signed up member of the No New Runway Club, alongside AirportWatch, AEF, RSPB, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the Woodland Trust, WWF, CPRE - and many more.

A new feature of our runway fight this time round will be the battle between the airport owners – now fighting like the proverbial 'ferrets in a sack.' We will not be getting into bed with Heathrow Airport Ltd but we won't be displeased if they spend large sums, far more than we could ever afford, in deflating some of the overblown pretensions of the new pushy Gatwick management. Our colleagues at Heathrow, battling against their two runway threats, will likewise watch the PR activities of Gatwick Airport Ltd with interest.

Like HACAN, our fellow campaign working at Heathrow, we face the prospect of the lives of thousands being changed irreversibly if a runway is built. Areas currently quiet, or relatively quiet, will find themselves subject to aircraft noise for large parts of the day. Areas now pleasant to live in will become unpleasant, people will move out, communities will break apart, the nature of others will change radically, with serious social consequences. Many will receive little or no compensation for the negative impacts. Runway building has real impacts on the lives of real people - and not merely those living very close to the airport.

We cannot, however, rely entirely on arguing for no new runway. It is necessary to show that doubling the size of Gatwick, making it as large as Heathrow today, would do unacceptable damage to the environment. Over the coming months we will be working to show that it is not a simple choice between Heathrow and Gatwick – which is the best or worst on a series of criteria – but that both are unacceptable. When the full impacts and implications of the 3 runway proposals become clear, they will be a powerful reason for the politicians to look again at the case for 'No New Runway'.

In some ways our campaign will be different to that against Heathrow. The airports are very different. We will talk about countryside, and about Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and about the dangers of urbanization that doubling the size of Gatwick airport would cause. We may speak about the deterioration in the quality of life of the millions of people who enjoy – at present – the peace and tranquillity of a rural life.

These are subjects that the Airports Commission doesn't yet seem to understand.

How well did the Airports Commission's interim report do on the AEF's 3 environmental & social tests?

The Aviation Environment Federation has set out three tests, to apply to the Airports Commission's Interim Report, are: <http://www.aef.org.uk/?p=1669>

1. Climate

Does the Commission demonstrate a pathway to meet our national climate change target in a one or two new runways scenario using realistic assumptions?

2. Quality of life

Does the Airports Commission only short-list options that will not worsen the quality of life for communities around airports?

3. Social Cost Benefit Analysis

In light of extensive challenges to the assumptions of economic benefits of expansion and recommendations by a well known economic consultancy firm, does the Airports Commission commit to carrying out a Social Cost Benefit Analysis of each of the short-listed proposals over the course of 2014?

The AEF have had a quick, initial look at the Interim Report, and set out areas on each of these where there is evidence of "positive steps" and areas of "missed opportunities". On climate AEF regret that there is uncertainty on international agreements, and that non-CO2 impacts of aviation may need to be taken into account in the future – but are not yet. On quality of life, AEF regrets that noise, air quality and local impacts have not yet been satisfactorily addressed. And AEF say a clear and transparent social cost benefit analysis of each of short-listed options is needed as part of the Commission's appraisal in 2014. Details at <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=19021>

Why the Commission's 'green light' for a new runway could still turn out to be a 'red light'

James Lees, from the Aviation Environment Federation, writing in the Huffington Post, says that while recent days have seen the 3 major parties edge towards a potential about-face on the desirability of a new runway for the south east, the underlying reasons for their opposition to it back in 2010 have not changed. In 2010 David Cameron famously promised "no ifs, no buts, no third runway" at Heathrow; Nick Clegg warned a 3rd runway would be a "disaster", and Ed Miliband threatened to resign from Cabinet over the issue.

The reason that politicians came out against a new runway in 2010, reversing a decision in favour of new runways at Heathrow and Stansted, wasn't for a lack of perceived need but down to the power of local opposition. This came from the impact of aircraft noise, its associated health impacts - and also local air pollution and air quality limits. The Airports Commission has so far only paid lip service to the importance of community opposition, mainly addressing only the issues of demand and capacity. The interim report provided no more than vague reassurances to the affected communities.

Without satisfactory reassurances from the Commission, communities will look to politicians to provide these. The Airports Commission has failed for now to achieve its purpose to take the politics out of the airports issue. The Interim Report has just re-opened the political debate.

**"No ifs, no buts,
no third runway"**

David Cameron



Only a Conservative government can now stop Labour's third runway at Heathrow:

Conservative leaflet from 2010 election in west London

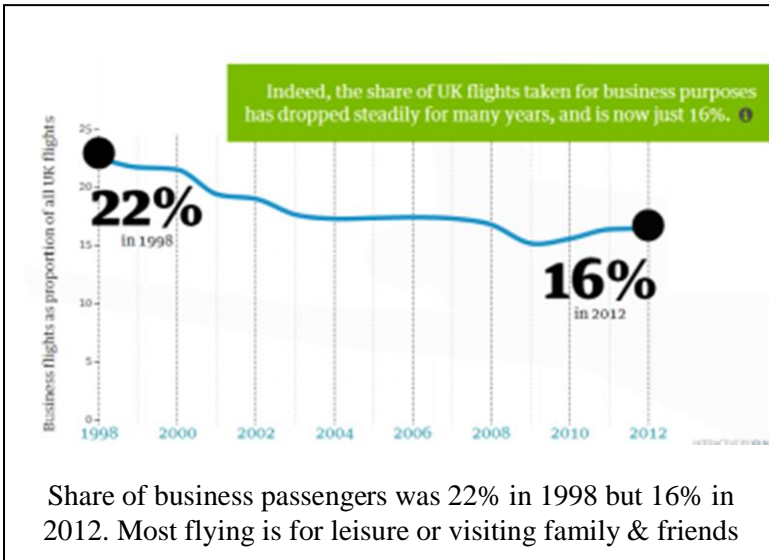
WWF data show the case for airport expansion to deal with business travel demand 'does not stack up'

WWF-UK has analysed figures from the CAA, which show business flights have made a modest recovery since the financial crash, but are still below 2000 levels. WWF says the data does not support the case for building new airport capacity for business travellers. Despite an improvement in the economy, business

flights have not picked up from the decline they have been experiencing for more than a decade. The number of business passengers is down 13% since 2000, and down as much as 23% in that time at Heathrow, where the aviation industry persistently argues for a 3rd runway - allegedly to benefit business travellers.

Jean Leston, transport policy manager of WWF-UK, said: "The Airports Commission seems to have bought the line that business needs airport expansion. But where's the evidence to prove it? At Heathrow, now the most likely site for a new runway, figures show that business flying has been on the decline for over a decade, even before the

recession." The DfT forecasts have considerable uncertainties in forecasting business travel, as the extent to which electronic communication will replace air travel for some trips in future is unclear. 16.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18863>



Fears that Ifield would be swallowed up if Gatwick builds 2nd runway

With the Airports Commission having made a southern runway at Gatwick one of their options, the people of the villages of Ifield and Langley Green are very concerned about the impact of a very busy full length runway, merely a few hundred metres away. The Ifield Village Association has expressed fears that a runway would destroy Ifield as a pleasant place, and convert it into an area beset by noise and acting just as a service area for an enlarged airport.

A 2nd Gatwick runway could lead to there being aircraft flying across the northern tip of Ifield village every few minutes for much of the day. Ifield is already disturbed every few minutes by aircraft climbing out of Gatwick Airport about a mile to the north.

If the runway creates huge development and many new jobs, that would mean bringing in workers from other areas - from the UK and from Europe - who would require up to 40,000 new houses. "Crawley already has a housing crisis, new houses would be built on open country in neighbouring authorities. Ifield village could be absorbed into massive new housing estates and lose its access to open country." <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18983>



Ifield and Langley Green are the residential areas just south of the runway to the north of Crawley – 2nd runway position indicated by thick grey line

It's 'Like being on death row': Harmondsworth residents facing devastating impact of Heathrow runway plans

Residents of the historic village of Harmondsworth, that could be obliterated under Heathrow's proposals to build a runway over it, said the plans would have a "devastating" impact on their lives. Some 1,500 buildings would be lost in Harmondsworth and neighbouring Longworth by a north west Heathrow runway - one of the options short-listed by the Airports Commission. People fear the prospect of being as little compensation as the airport can get away with. Residents and business owners in Harmondsworth urged the Government to speed up their decision-making - comparing the impact to "being on death row."



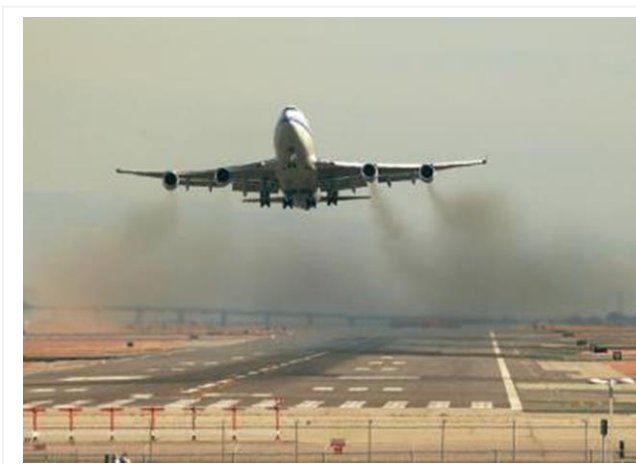
Harmondsworth's Tithe Barn, built in 1426, Grade I listed, ranks alongside the Houses of Parliament and Westminster Abbey for its exceptional architectural and historic interest – according to English Heritage

Parts of Harmondsworth are over 1,000 years old and the village contains the Tithe Barn and St Mary's Church, both places of heritage value. Sir John Betjeman called the Tithe Barn the cathedral of Middlesex. It is the country's biggest surviving medieval timber-framed building. The villagers are now driven by anger and a deep sense of betrayal. They are already working on their campaign of protests and demonstrations in the new year. Their target is David Cameron, who promised to ban a third runway, and has now betrayed them. The airport has started buying up homes in the area, but villagers are preparing to fight one last stand against its plans to ruin their area and spoil their lives.

One resident summed up some of the human tragedy of these commercially driven plans to push through runway expansion: "I have been badly let down. When David Cameron said 'no 3rd runway' I bought double glazing and a new heating system. Once you have spent your pension, you can't get it back, can you?" Another said: "This is a political game. We all feel cheated. I don't trust anyone anymore." The vicar of the flint-fronted St Mary's Church, first built in 1067 said: "This is just like being on death row for a long time. I feel very angry now because the Tories have lied. They got the vote of the people and now it is going to happen. A lot of parishioners here are devastated."

Geraldine Nicholson, who lives in West Drayton just 100m away from one of the proposed runways, said it is not just the villages that would be affected, and 10,000 homes north of the M4 would suffer too - there would be very negative social, as well as environmental, impacts. Local people in the Harmondsworth area are now planning their protests, against the huge, influential, well funded corporate power of the Whitehall machine and Heathrow's international investors. . <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18982>

Heathrow residents to demand financial compensation for impact of Airports Commission report on their house prices



People with homes near Heathrow will press for financial compensation for loss of value of their homes due to runway proposals. As the Commission is not due to report till summer 2015, at the least they face blight and an impact on their house prices over the next 18 months, while they are held in limbo.

Anti-Heathrow campaigners will appeal to Sir Howard Davies, chairman of the Airports Commission, to ensure homeowners receive financial support for the uncertainty and potential damage.

<http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18859>

“Heathrow Hub” proposers, claiming to be without vested interests, revealed to stand to make millions from options on land

The "Heathrow Hub" proposal for a 4 runway Heathrow got some very expensive full page ads in the main broadsheet papers recently, probably costing a total of well over £200,000. Its northern option, of extending the existing northern runway to the west, has been short-listed by the Airports Commission.

The Guardian reports that the group behind the "Heathrow Hub" scheme, which said in its adverts that it was without the "lobbying of vested interests" stands to make millions from options on nearby land should its £12.5bn plan be accepted by the government. Heathrow Hub adverts aimed to persuade the public that its expansionist solution could mean "quieter Heathrow expansion" despite almost doubling the number of planes over London.

Their plan includes building on a 200-acre site north of Heathrow that the group could buy for a fraction of its future value. If the government approved their full scheme, the value of the land currently might rise from around £10,000 per acre to £2m or more – an increase in value from £2m to at least £400m for the site. The 4 Heathrow Hub directors are shareholders in the land, with a vested interest in its development.

The FT reports that their financial backing came from financier, Ian Hannam, whose conduct had recently been called into serious question by the Financial Services Authority, since renamed the Financial Conduct Authority, causing him to resign as global chairman of JPMorgan Cazenove.

<http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18346> and FT story on Ian Hannam at <http://tinyurl.com/ian-hannam>

Airports Commission input into National Infrastructure Plan on improvements to surface access to main airports

Sir Howard Davies wrote to George Osborne on 26th November, on surface access to airports. This has influenced the National Infrastructure Plan for 2013, now released. The Airports Commission says that as adding any new runways will take a decade (or decades), in the interim “there is a strong case for attaching a greater strategic priority to transport investments which improve surface access to our airports.” The letter gives specific recommendations on improving surface access at UK main airports.

On Heathrow it recommends: "Recognising the importance of encouraging modal shift towards more environmentally sustainable forms of transport at Heathrow, not only for supporting future expansion plans but also for optimising the airport's operations within its current capacity constraints, the Government should work with Network Rail to undertake a detailed study to find the best option for enhancing rail access into Heathrow from the south. Initial indications are that up to roughly 15% of Heathrow's passengers in the London and South East region could benefit from improved Southern Access."

They "remain concerned that the proportion of users (particularly workforce) accessing Heathrow using private cars remains high, with consequent implications for air quality."

<http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18664>

Airports Commission surface transport improvement plans for Gatwick airport including £180 million station upgrade

The Airports Commission have recommended improvements for Gatwick including improvements to the train station, which could cost £180 million - "subject to the airport providing an appropriate contribution to the costs of the scheme." It is not currently regarded as being well suited to travellers, especially those with heavy luggage, so better luggage space would need to be added. The Commission says Gatwick is succeeding in getting more long haul routes, and due to capacity constraints at Heathrow, "we believe that the UK's interests to enable passengers to more effectively access Gatwick's increasing connections to new markets, as well as its existing route network."

The government says it will provide £50m towards the redevelopment of the station, subject to satisfactory commercial negotiations with Gatwick airport. 5.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18648>

A sad day for democracy as Luton Borough Council approves Luton airport's expansion plans

A 9-hour development control meeting at Luton Borough Council on 20th December ended by approving plans for doubling the capacity of Luton Airport from 9 million to 18 million passengers per annum.

HALE (Hertfordshire Against Luton Expansion) report that only 5 voting members of the 11-strong development control committee were present, plus the chair – one member quite properly withdrew from discussion because he is a non-executive director of the company which owns the airport, and the rest sent apologies. Cllr Amy O'Callaghan who represents Luton South Ward – the area most affected by aircraft noise – was away for pre-booked Christmas holidays.

Objectors from local town and parish councils, campaign groups and private individuals voiced serious concerns about the proposals, including:

- a disproportionate number of additional flights in the late evening and early morning**
- back-peddalling on previous commitments by the airport to reduce noise-fine levels**
- the reduction in quality of life caused by 60% more planes**
- that the local transport infrastructure would not stand increased road/rail traffic**
- that the proposals make climate change and global warming worse**
- that increased particulates and night noise will damage health**
- that the airport already has a bad track record on noise control**
- that the local economy would be better served by diversification**

Andrew Lambourne for HALE said “It takes courage for a Councillor to stand up and say to their planning advisers – ‘You need to do more to protect the quality of life of our residents.’ Sadly, none showed that kind of courage – even though we could see that they wanted to.”

“The voting process when it came was heart-rending: all the Councillors expressed their deep concern over the seriousness and difficulty of the decision they were about to take given on the one hand the need to do right by Luton, and on the other hand the need to do right by the people of Luton. In the end, Luton won – and hence lost.”

Andrew continued: “Ultimately this was such a big decision that to make it with half the committee absent was simply not democratic – and is another good reason why it should be called in.”

Luton Airport's expansion plan includes nearly doubling passenger throughput to 18 million people a year, which could mean 45,000 extra flights per year. It involves extending terminal and car park buildings, constructing a new parallel taxiway and extending aircraft parking aprons. However the approval must now be communicated to the Secretary of State for Local Government Eric Pickles.

On November 18th Luton council received a direction, under the Town and Country Planning Management Order 2010 not to grant permission without specific authorisation from him. This direction was issued to enable him to consider whether he should direct that the application be referred to him, under Section 77 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. There has been a long running battle over whether the plans constitute a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (in which case it must be referred to the Secretary of State). If an airport expansion project would mean it would deliver capability to handle more than an extra 10 million passengers/year, it should count as an NSIP. It appears that Luton's plans would result in the capability to deliver 10 million/year.

Councillors at the meeting heard objections from residents and councillors from St Albans, Harpenden, Stevenage, Luton, Hitchin and Flamstead. People are very concerned the expansion would bring an unacceptable increase in noise and air pollution. The airport is proposing 60% more planes and many very late in the evening and very early in the morning.

For more details see www.hale.uk.net

Labour denies Heathrow third runway U-turn – but there has been a shift away from opposition

Labour has played down reports that Ed Miliband is set to abandon his opposition to a 3rd Heathrow runway. But he is under pressure from the shadow chancellor Ed Balls to be more supportive when the Airports Commission reports next week (though the report has been leaked already). A parliamentary row has been brewing over claims that No 10 has pressured the Commission into keeping a broader shortlist to avoid an early row focused on Heathrow - though Heathrow appears to be the main focus. Ed Balls in a recent speech to the CBI said he would like to see the Airports Commission make recommendations before the general election. The party's previous shadow transport secretary, Maria Eagle, was shifted in the recent shadow cabinet reshuffle partly due to disagreements with Balls over HS2 and Heathrow.

Maria Eagle's replacement as shadow transport secretary, Mary Creagh, has tried to be non-committal towards the Airports Commission, saying: "No party can say now that it will implement its recommendations when we simply don't know what the costs of any proposals will be. Obviously the Conservatives and Lib Dems haven't made any such commitments." She said Labour would not rule any runway options in or out while the Commission was still deliberating. 12.12.2013

<http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18759>

Closing stretch of M25 for years, to build new Heathrow runway, is 'unthinkable' and a 'non-starter'

Both locations for a new Heathrow runway, suggested by the Airports Commission, involve building a runway over a particularly wide and busy section of the M25. The Standard reports that the UK's main motoring organisations are united in horror at the prospect of closing this stretch of the M25 for up to 5 years to build a runway. The plans would mean the six-lane motorway having to be sunk into a tunnel for at least a half-a-mile south of junction 14. In its runway submission to the Commission in July, Heathrow just said the M4/M25 motorway junction requires "major reconfiguration" but did not add further detail.

A spokesman for the AA said: "If you thought the protests from residents was bad just wait for the howls from motorists if this goes ahead. They are already stuck in daily traffic jams on this stretch of the M25 and the prospect of something on this scale doesn't bear thinking about. For the millions of drivers who use the M25 regularly this is a non-starter. The M25 is the artery on which millions of commuters and businesses rely. Any suggestion of large-scale disruption there will cause major backlash."

Another said: "A five year closure borders on the unthinkable. It's a hugely busy section of motorway where are they going to put all the vehicles?" <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18959>

Large purchases of planes by middle eastern airlines heralds change in Heathrow-type hub model

Emirates ordered 150 Boeing 777Xs at the 5-day Dubai air show, worth about \$76bn [£46bn]. In total Emirates bought \$99 billion-worth, and the total value of orders for planes bought was over \$200bn - much by middle east airlines, like Qatar Airways and Etihad of Abu Dhabi. The middle east airlines are redrawing the global aviation map, enabling Gulf carriers to move traffic from hubs like Heathrow, Frankfurt and Singapore. They will be doing more long haul routes in future, not merely medium haul, and competing more with established long haul European airlines like BA, Lufthansa and Air France.

An aviation analyst said the hub-spoke model, where long-haul passengers transfer to a short flight to reach their destination, would come under increasing threat. He said hub traffic (the Heathrow model) with one long-haul and one short-haul flight is incredibly wasteful. Two medium-haul flights into a hub is more efficient. A 16-hour flight broken up into two 8-hour flights is quite efficient- more so than a huge plane carrying enough fuel for a very long flight. That suits a middle eastern hub airport. 26.11.2013

<http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18522>

Prospects of the ETS survival weakened by pressure against it from UK, Germany and France

The prospects of carbon emissions from aviation being adequately accounted for by the EU ETS in future look bleak. The Commission has proposed changing the law so aviation emissions that take place outside EU air space are exempt. But Germany, France and the UK also want to exempt foreign airlines from the ETS entirely - even for the portions of flights that take place within EU airspace - because anything less would not be politically acceptable to China, India, Russia and the United States.

Some MEPs are now lining up against the Commission as well. Some hope the Parliament might be evenly split, when it comes time to vote, between those who oppose any retreat, those who support the Commission's semi-retreat, and those who support the member states' full retreat. The problem with the partial retreat is opposition from non-EU countries to their airlines (other than those from small developing countries) being liable for emissions taking place within EU airspace, for flights landing or taking off at EU airports.

Even the most stalwart European lawmakers have admitted privately that they could not hope to hold out against the combined pressure of Beijing, Washington and Airbus. The choice now lies between partial retreat and (more likely) full retreat. There will be a vote in January about the draft proposal. 5.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18651>

On 18th December four NGOs (Transport & Environment, the Aviation Environment Federation, Réseau Action Climat France, and Bund - Friends of the Earth Germany) wrote to French president François Hollande, German chancellor Angela Merkel, and UK prime minister David Cameron to express deep concerns about their governments' continued efforts to weaken aviation ETS. The NGOs are calling on the leaders to urgently withdraw the UK/Germany/France joint proposal and lend their government's support to base the ETS on regional airspace. They also urge the leaders to support the European Commission's proposal to ensure enforcement measures are taken against airlines which have failed to comply with their 2012 obligations. The letter can be seen at <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18997>

German study: air travel taxes are an important instrument for climate protection

A study in Germany has been commissioned by a range of development and environmental organisations, into the effects of taxing aviation. It found that charging some taxes to air travel does not lead to movement of passengers from German airports to use foreign airports or to job losses in the aviation business - which is what the Federation of German aviation industry claims, probably incorrectly. The report says that additional revenue should be generated from air travel, to help fund mitigation and adaptation to climate change in developing countries.

The organisations are calling on the coalition government in Germany to keep, and increase, air travel tax. The tax started in January 2011, and is charged based on distance travelled with rates of €7.56, €23.62, or €42.52 for short, medium and long haul flights.

In Germany, as in the UK and in most of Europe, jet fuel is exempted from the energy tax on international flights and VAT is not charged. This tax break amounts annually to about €10.4 billion euros lost to the German tax authorities, which is massively more than the approximately €1 billion from air travel tax currently paid. The report wants to see taxation incentivise the most efficient utilization of planes.

2.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18619>

In Toronto expansion of lakeside Billy Bishop airport is strenuously opposed by thousands whose lives it would adversely affect

Pearson airport is the main airport for Toronto. It has several long runways, can take large jets, and had around 35 million passengers in the past year. By contrast, Billy Bishop waterfront airport is tiny, lying along the lake edge close to central Toronto. Its one runway, by the water, is only about 1,200 metres and it

had 2 million passengers last year. There are plans to greatly expand Billy Bishop airport, with the runway extended by 200 metres at both ends, to take jets rather than the current turboprops. There are plans for greatly increased numbers of passengers. There has been very vocal opposition from the local group, NoJetsTO, who fear having this enlarged airport will have highly negative impacts on the city, creating noise, air pollution, water pollution, disruption to leisure activities that take place on the lake, traffic congestion, interference with childrens' learning in school, and lowering the quality of life of many living in the area. They say the large jets should stay at Pearson airport, which is well equipped to deal with them. 9 .12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18568>

VisitBritain data shows countries with highest spending by inbound tourists: top is USA (13% of the total), France (8%), Germany (7%) and Australia (5%)

Visit Britain has commissioned a report, by Deloitte and Oxford Economics. The report indicates (though Oxford Economics is well known for using extravagant multipliers for their job and economic benefits estimates) that the tourism sector in the UK is worth some £127 billion per year now, and might grow at 3.8% per year. They say it could be worth £257 billion to the UK economy by 2025 (which, of course, is a guess). Their report says that UK income from foreign tourists in 2012 was £24 billion, (giving a net UK tourism deficit from outbound tourists of £13.8 billion). The £24 billion contributed £6.7 billion to HMRC.

Data for 2012 show that the countries whose visitors to the UK spent the most were the USA (by far the most at 13% of the total), France (8%), Germany (7%) and Australia (5%). Then Ireland, Spain and Italy at 4% each.

By far the largest number of visitors came from France (12% of the total), next Germany at 10% and USA at 9%. Predictably those who have come long haul spend more on their visits than Europeans. In 2012 about 73% of inbound visitors reached the UK by air.

In 2012 there were 179,000 visits by Chinese people to the UK (0.6% of all overseas visits). They accounted for 1.7% of all nights in the UK by overseas visitors, and they spent £300m spent, accounting for 1.6% of the total spent whilst in the UK by overseas visitors. 4.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18638>

Government and VisitBritain to launch “China Welcome” initiative to get more Chinese tourists

The UK is blatantly trying to get as many high spending Chinese tourists as possible to visit, and more importantly - as the government sees it - spend their money here. More and more of it. The shameless touting for Chinese business is, frankly, embarrassing. We don't even try to be subtle in our desire to leech money out of tourists from China. Now all the stops are being pulled out to increase visitor numbers - including making obtaining visas easier. Sec of State at DCMS, Maria Miller, will launch a "China Welcome" initiative in Spring 2014, and Visit Britain says the initiatives to attract more Chinese could see 650,000 Chinese visitors per year by 2020, spending about £1.1 billion in the UK. The UK travel industry is salivating at the prospect that “In the last 12 months China has become the largest tourism source market in the world, worth \$102 billion.”

4.12.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18628>

New 7 year deal between Gatwick and Norwegian, that includes airline’s backing for 2nd runway

Gatwick airport has struck a deal with European low fares airline Norwegian, which includes getting their active support for the airport's plans to get a 2nd runway. This comes weeks after the CAA agreed that Gatwick can make bespoke commercial arrangements with its airlines. Norwegian is to start low-cost transatlantic services to 3 US airports (New York, Los Angeles, Fort Lauderdale), using Boeing 787 Dreamliners next summer in addition to an increased European network.. The number of destinations served by Norwegian from Gatwick will rise to 33 in 2014. <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18579>

How high are the carbon emissions from flying, compared to other forms of consumption?

Carbon footprints of manufacture of products, and their life cycle carbon footprints, are not easy to measure – and there are a limited number of figures around. Calculations are complicated, and there are huge numbers of variables and imponderables. But it is illuminating to compare the carbon emissions of some of our regular consumption items.

For example, the emissions from one person flying, return (including the non-CO2 impacts) from London to Rome, economy class, is approximately equivalent to:

- Leaving a 20 watt light bulb on, all the time, for over 5 years.
- Or buying more than 500 loaves of bread.
- Or buying around 500 pints on beer in the pub.
- Or buying a £600 gold and diamond necklace.
- Or the manufacturing emissions of making a new laptop computer.
- Or about a quarter of the average UK household's use of electricity for a year.
- Or buying good quality new carpet for a room of about 4 x 7 metres.

One person flying return, economy class, to New York would be about the same emissions as 760 machine loads of clothes washed, and dried in a dryer. Or about the same as the electricity to power a modern laptop for 8 hours a day, for 18 years.

An economy return trip from London to New York in about the same, in carbon terms, as almost half of the average UK home's gas usage, or almost all the average UK home's electricity usage. Or carpeting (good quality carpet) 6 rooms of 4 x 4 metres.

Air travel is a very high carbon consumer product choice. <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18531>

Thomas Cook, Virgin Atlantic, Lufthansa and Tui sell their 21% stake in NATS to UK pension fund

Thomas Cook, Virgin Atlantic, TUI Travel and Lufthansa agreed to sell most of their stakes in NATS to Britain's biggest pension fund, the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). USS will pay £152m for 49.9% of the "Airline Group", which owns 41.9% of NATS. The deal therefore indirectly gives USS a 21% stake in Nats, which handles more than 6,000 flights a day.

BA, easyJet and the Monarch Airlines retirement plan, the other owners of the Airline Group, will keep their stakes. BA and EasyJet said they were the two companies most reliant on Nats so had kept their stakes in order to maintain their influence over operations. The UK government has a 49% stake in NATS plus a special share. The government had intended to sell half its stake but ministers changed their minds when faced with a potential outcry (Feb 2011) over letting air traffic control out of public hands.

21.11.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18520>

Prestwick Airport to be sold to Scottish Government for £1 – and other failing regional airports look to business parks and housing

Infratil has sold Prestwick Airport to the Scottish Government for £1. Infratil said the airport's value had been "fully impaired" - effectively written off - after Prestwick and sister airport Manston in Kent were collectively valued at £11 million in March. Infratil bought Prestwick from Stagecoach in 2001 for £33m. Manston is being sold to Stagecoach founder Ann Gloag for an expected £400,000. Scottish Ministers are taking over Prestwick airport, which has been losing £7m a year, to avert its closure and safeguard 1,400 jobs, including 300 at the airport. Infratil described its investment in the airports to have been "unsuccessful. While such regional airports looked like a good investment 5 years ago, they now are not, as they are reliant on "robust air traffic growth driving demand." Some are now turning to building business parks or housing on the land. <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18387>

Many regional airports doing badly – falling numbers of passengers and falling profits

Many of UK's regional airports are not doing well – eg Prestwick and Manston. Over the past 5 years, with the recession, many have seen falling passenger numbers. Paul Kehoe, CEO of Birmingham airport, is quoted as saying nationalising airports (Prestwick and Cardiff) is not the answer. “If you’re nationalising (airports) – then something’s not working. Governments shouldn’t have to interfere.” A venture capitalist specialising in turn-arounds, says there are too many airports, and very few UK airports are profitable. Many of them therefore need to close.

While airlines fight for customers, competitively cutting fares, the airports fear this passes the economic pain onto them. The proliferation of regional airports means that many have overlapping catchment areas, intensifying the scrabble for a limited pool of travellers. Airports have to keep their aeronautical charges low in order to keep airlines, and make little or no profit. Many regional airports were bought for high prices, and there was undue optimism about their growth - which has not materialised. However, some regional airports within reach of London may be used to increase the south east's airport capacity.

27.11.2013 <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18582>

Campaign – ‘Let Britain Fly’ – launched by London First, calls for urgent action to increase airport capacity

In October, business lobby group London First announced it would be launching a new campaign called "Let Britain Fly" with expensive publicity. The campaign will cost £250,000 and London First is seeking £25,000 each from businesses, trade unions and London boroughs to fund it. They have got a number of Britain's large companies, including Aberdeen Asset Management, Land Securities, Lloyds Banking Group, Next, Associated British Foods, WPP and many others to sign up. They want a new runway built, and they want it soon – allegedly "to ensure Britain remains competitive". <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18427>



Thousands Heathrow of T5 high ceiling light bulbs to be replaced by high-wire artists – as no records kept of agreement on how to maintain them

Heathrow is calling in a team of high-wire artists to replace thousands of out-of-reach light bulbs at Terminal 5. The departure concourse has got progressively darker as bulb after bulb has failed, till now some 60% are blown. No bulbs have been replaced over 5 years, as no safe and effective means had been found of doing so. Now a specialist company using staff hanging off ropes will change all the bulbs for LEDs that should last at least 5 years, over some 4 months. It may cost several million pounds. T5 has one of the world's largest controlled-lighting systems. It is reported that all minutes and information relating to discussion with the architects, RSHP, some 8 years ago about the maintenance of the lights had been lost. No record remains of what was agreed on replacing bulbs. <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=18575>

Useful Info

- For large amounts of up-to-date news on airports and aviation, see AirportWatch's news pages http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?page_id=148
 - Watch plane movements in real time over the UK FlightRadar <http://www.flightradar24.com>
 - Follow updates from the Airports Commission <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/airports-commission>
 - For daily transport news in the UK - Transportinfo at <http://transportinfo.org.uk>
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Bulletin compiled by Sarah Clayton - with thanks to many people for their help. 20.12.2013
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