

Adding Capacity to Heathrow Airport  
(DfT Consultation)  
Research Services House  
Elmgrove Road  
HARROW HA1 2QG

27 February 2008

Dear Sirs

I am writing in response to the consultation document "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport".

My view is that the Government should reject the idea of a third runway, and in expressing that view I am confident that it reflects the overwhelming view of my constituents in Ruislip-Northwood.

My reasons for taking this position can be summarised as follows:-

### **1. The devastating local impact**

In effect the proposal is to add the equivalent of a new airport the size of Gatwick. Hillingdon Council has prepared a number of detailed presentations which make it clear that the impact on communities in the south of the Borough of Hillingdon will be devastating. The damage to quality of life is not restricted to the South of the Borough. My constituents will suffer even more congestion on the roads they use and new flight paths may have consequences for noise pollution across Northolt, Harefield and Harrow as well as creating uncertainty around flight frequencies in and out of RAF Northolt. The people of Hillingdon were promised by both BAA and the Government that Terminal 5 was the end of expansion and that promise should be honoured.

### **2. Misery for millions of Londoners under the flight path**

It is time to reconsider the position of the 2003 White Paper which suggested 57 decibels as the level of noise pollution that indicates "the onset of significant community annoyance". The Department for Transport's recent report, entitled 'Attitudes to Noise from Aviation Sources in England' (ANASE) considers a more representative figure to be 50 decibels. The report argues that the present method by which the noise generated by aircraft landing/taking off is measured is now obsolete. It accounts for neither the large increase in flight volume, nor the heightening public demand for a quiet life. It is estimated that 258,000 thousand people live within Heathrow's 57

decibel zone. However, close to two and million occupy an area where 50 decibels of aircraft noise can be recorded. If this is to be taken into account, the consultation on the 57 decibel noise needs to be re-issued, particularly given that large areas of London affected by noise from Heathrow have failed to be consulted.

### **3. A false premise**

The case for expansion is built on a flimsy 'business case' and the ludicrous proposition that somehow our economic status as a nation depends on the size of our national airport. The estimated net present value looks very small when set against the cost to quality of life and the environment, even if the underlying assumptions are valid. As it is the business case is flimsy because it ignores an annual tourism deficit estimated at £15 billion a year. It also ignores the growing power of videoconferencing technology to replace the need for business travel. It ignores the 'carbon cost' associated with unchecked expansion of an industry that is the fastest growing source of emissions. It ignores the more logical green option of directing public policy at making the rail alternative more attractive for the 25% of flights out of Heathrow to short haul destinations. It ignores the fact that our economic competitiveness has not been undermined over the last decade as other European airports have grown faster than Heathrow. Finally Annex C of the consultation document shows that there remains considerable scope to grow the number of passengers passing through Heathrow without a third runway. Indeed on BAA's own numbers, 'maximum use of existing runways' could accommodate growth of passengers from 67 million in 2006 to 95 million pa in 2030. In short, Heathrow is not full and there is no overwhelming business case. Indeed, the voice I hear from business is not 'give us a bigger Heathrow'; it is "give us a better Heathrow". The new owners of the airport should be encouraged to pursue efficiency and not just volume.

### **4. The credibility of the Government's Climate Change policy**

I serve on the Environment Audit Committee in the House of Commons and have listened to a great deal of evidence that causes very real concern about the growth of emissions from the aviation sector. In this context, the decision to expand Heathrow airport has very damaging implications for the credibility of the Government's effort to engage people with the risk of climate change both in the UK and abroad. The Government has painstakingly built up a reputation for leadership on climate change. It regularly describes Climate

Change as the greatest challenge of our time. And yet it continues to adopt a 'predict and provide' approach to capacity for the fastest growing source of emissions. Across the country, the large number of people concerned about climate change will ask whether their Government is really serious about meeting the challenge of reducing our emissions. The same question will be asked in the key international negotiations, and could be used as a pretext for inaction. This decision therefore has very important ramifications. The Government argues that aviation emissions are best controlled through emissions trading even though the evidence to date is that emissions trading has not been an effective brake on absolute emissions, largely because politicians have not had the courage to set the tough caps required. If Climate Change is one of the priorities of our time, then Government should signal that clearly and consistently through its actions as well as its words. If the climate scientists are right then we will have to manage demand for flying. If the Government really wants to show leadership on Climate Change, then saying No to the expansion of Heathrow would send a very powerful signal.

With these reasons in mind I am opposed to the plans to extend Heathrow by building a third runway and a sixth terminal.

Yours sincerely

Nick Hurd MP  
**Ruislip-Northwood**  
Tel: 020 7219 1053  
Fax: 020 7219 4854  
Email: hurdn@parliament.uk