

Third runway could mean 38 arrivals at Heathrow before 5am



Londoners and people living to the west of the airport could be forced to suffer noise from up to 38 arrivals at Heathrow before 5am if a third runway goes ahead, according to previously unpublished Department for Transport figures.

There would also be noise from 25 potential departures in the same period.

Currently people in south and west London suffer noise from around 15 or 16 flights every morning before 6am, when the airport is operating on westerlies. Aircraft land in this direction for around two-thirds of the year.

Communities to the west of the airport suffer in the same way when the airport is on easterly operations.

The DfT figures reveal that as many as 35 flights could arrive before 5am, along with 25 take-offs.

But data compiled for the DfT shows that if a three-runway airport is to maximise its capacity, it would need to start operating with 38 aircraft an hour landing from 4am.

There would be a further 38 arrivals between 5am and 6am.

The DfT is using the analysis of runway capacity to support its view that a three-runway Heathrow operated by the current airport owners could operate more flights than the rival Heathrow Hub scheme.

But now council leaders fear that their residents will pay the price for the expansion with more early morning noise.

Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "The ill-health consequences of a third runway are frightening. If it's not worsening air quality from increased road traffic, it's disruption to sleep patterns from early morning noise.

"The Government has failed to assess the true health impacts from expansion and it has failed even to identify which communities will be affected."

Wandsworth Council Leader, Ravi Govindia, said: "The Davies Commission said a night flight ban should be a condition for approval of a third runway.



“But these figures show that instead of a ban Londoners could face a five-fold increase in early morning arrivals before 6am.

“Once again our residents’ needs are being ignored. It simply makes no sense to add more flights and more noise at a time of day when people have a right to be enjoying their sleep.”

The Leader of Richmond Council, Gareth Roberts, said: “People in south and west London will have their sleep ruined if Heathrow gets its third runway. The airport will need to squeeze in as many flights as it can in the early morning period if it is to achieve full capacity over the whole day.

“The DfT and Heathrow will say that with three runways the noise can be shared around - but it hardly counts as relief if you know you are going to be woken up one day in three.

“Sharing the noise around also means that more people will experience early morning noise for the first time. But right now because we have no information on flightpaths no one can say with certainty which communities will be affected.”

And Cllr Simon Dudley, Leader of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, insisted:

“The runway is simply unbuildable. We would urge MPs on all sides to put people’s health first and reject the Government’s plans next week when they get the chance to vote on the National Policy Statement.

“The potential increase in night flights is frightening. Many people just won’t know if and how they could be affected. It is another example of how the health impacts of a third runway are not being properly assessed.”

The local authority group opposed to Heathrow expansion includes the London boroughs of Hillingdon, Richmond and Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead Council, with others set to join.

If following the MPs’ vote on Monday, the Government moves to formally designate the National Planning Statement supporting the third runway project, these local councils will have six weeks to challenge the decision by way of a judicial review.