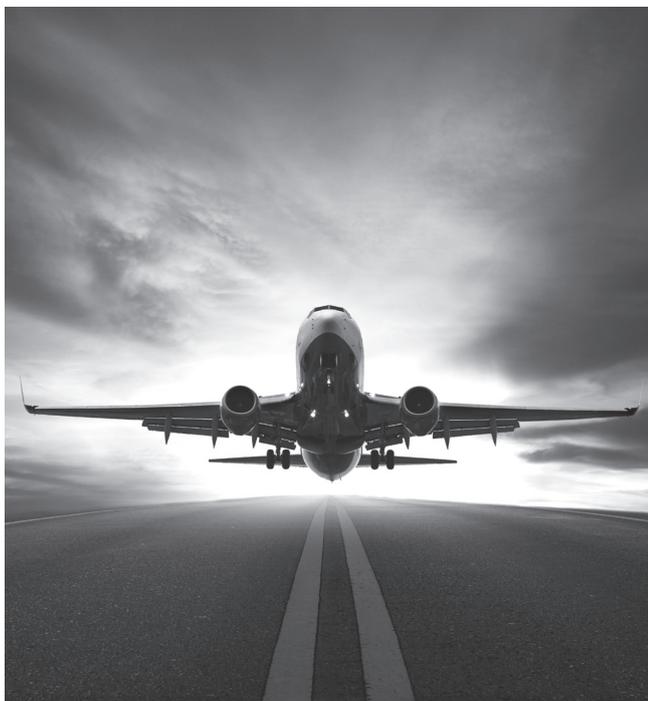


Government needs to come clean on the real impact of Heathrow expansion



The Leaders of four London and Thames Valley councils have today (March 31) accused the government of failing to come clean on the real impact of Heathrow expansion.

In written evidence to the Transport Select Committee, Hillingdon, Richmond, Wandsworth and Windsor and Maidenhead councils, said the government's draft National Policy Statement (NPS) ignores all the fundamental concerns about expanding Heathrow.

In the evidence the councils highlight a series of concerns including:

- Increase in noise: Increase in flights and new flight paths over quiet parts of the South East. With noise respite being halved.
- Road access: NPS doesn't include a credible plan for how the government will ensure that there isn't an increase in road journeys. Or indeed the cost of the infrastructure required to support the airport (and who would pay for it)
- Increased levels of pollution: Heathrow already contributes to illegal pollution levels which would increase with expansion. The Government has not yet produced lawful air quality plans.
- More night flights: Night flights would continue, and the Government's proposed 6.5 hour ban doesn't cover the whole night.
- Increased detrimental health impacts: Expanding Heathrow would damage thousands of people's health - particularly children and those with existing conditions. Noise annoyance is directly related to lost healthy years and premature deaths. Hundreds of thousands of people are exposed to noise around Heathrow and this contrasts with a much lower number around Gatwick.
- Increased traffic levels: Expansion would generate extra road passenger journeys a year and double the airport's existing freight operation. The NPS only 'strives' to meet its public pledge around road journeys.
- Communities will be destroyed: Around 1,000 homes will be destroyed as Heathrow expands. There is also no planned infrastructure e.g. community facilities to support an expanded airport.



Councillor Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "The government repeatedly chooses to ignore the facts that are plain for the rest of us to see - that an expanded Heathrow would break the law on air quality and pollution and have a disastrous impact on people's health and wellbeing. It is gravely mistaken if it thinks we're going to stand by and let that happen.

"The current consultation doesn't reveal the full facts and is frankly a sham, designed to mislead residents into thinking they have a say when in fact they have anything but.

"It's time the government stops wasting time and taxpayers money and turns its attention to finding a workable alternative to Heathrow."

Cllr Simon Dudley, leader of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, said:

"When I visited the consultation event in Maidenhead earlier this month I asked staff there directly why key information such as night flights, air pollution and flight paths over residents' homes were not included and no one could give me a straight answer.

"We want people to be given the facts and not the spin and throughout this supposed consultation we are yet to see full details of how a third runway at Heathrow would impact residents' lives, homes and health."

Lord True, Leader of Richmond Council, said:

"Big Heathrow will be more expensive, more polluting, more dangerous in security terms, will take longer to build, require more public money, destroy more homes, put more power in the pockets of State monopolists and be against all the principles of competition in which we should believe. Even in the sleek and selfish world of Heathrow's fat-wad lobbyists eight such giant wrongs don't make a right.

"The Government needs to stop spin masquerading as consultation and come clean on the real impact of expansion on Londoners. The truth is that it isn't possible to expand Heathrow without severely damaging the lives of millions of people. The Government should quit now and stop wasting money on this charade."

Ravi Govindia, Leader of Wandsworth Council, said: "The Government's plans for Heathrow will never pass a simple legal test on air quality. The airport already churns out unlawful levels of air pollution, offers woefully inadequate public transport connectivity and has Europe's worst noise footprint - and that's with just two runways. Expansion will make all these issues worse. It's wrong on every level, legally undeliverable and will end in failure after years of wasted effort. Nothing is going to change between now and 2018 to make this scheme any less polluting so ministers should face up to this truth now and abandon their plans for a third runway."