

Government delays Heathrow decision



2M Councils: "Government must rule out third runway now"

Members of the 2M group of councils opposed to Heathrow expansion say the Government should decisively rule out a third runway now instead of wasting months studying this "futile" proposal.

In a statement today the Government confirmed that it won't respond to the airports commission's recommendation to expand Heathrow until the middle of next year as the environmental impacts have not been properly considered.

The commission's report took almost three years to complete and cost taxpayers millions.

The cross-party local authority campaign group, which includes Wandsworth, Richmond, Hammersmith and Fulham and Hillingdon, say the delay is pointless as no amount of additional analysis can make this highly polluting scheme comply with environmental legislation.

They argue that Heathrow is already Europe's worst polluting airport and its location in a densely populated urban area makes it impossible to expand without causing unacceptable increases in air pollution, aircraft noise and transport congestion.

The Government's decision comes as another major blow to the credibility of the UK Airports Commission which has once again failed to convince the Government to follow its recommendations.

In 2013 the commission's first report on short term measures to expand aviation capacity also proved unworkable and was quickly shelved by ministers after publication. This earlier work also focussed on expanding the Heathrow operation with extra night flights and removing daytime runway alternation noise respite. The proposals were ignored and have not resurfaced since.

Guy Senior, Wandsworth Council's executive member for aviation and a 2M group spokesman, said: "Clearly Mr Cameron realises the airports commission is pointing him down a legal cul-de-sac. It's just a great shame he didn't rule out this futile scheme altogether. This airport's location makes a third runway completely untenable and there is nothing any additional study can do to disguise that very simple fact."



Ray Puddifoot, Hillingdon Council leader and a 2M group spokesman, said: "The government should rule out Heathrow expansion now, not in six months time. No ifs, no buts. It has been proven yet again that it cannot be accommodated without resulting in unacceptable levels of noise, air pollution and destroying local communities. It's deeply disappointing that our residents have to live with more uncertainty and distress while this futile debate rumbles on."

Lord True, leader of Richmond Council and a 2M group spokesman, said: "The third runway should never have been called from the grave to which David Cameron wisely consigned it in 2010. Now David Cameron's government should have the courage to drive a stake into its heart. It is wrong to limit the deferred decision to the narrow issue of air quality, troubling though that is, and impossible though Heathrow will find it to comply. Issues of noise, competition, economics, transport and security remain decisively stacked against Heathrow and should not be left out of the final reckoning."

Stephen Cowan, Hammersmith & Fulham Council leader and 2M spokesman, said: "The third runway should be ruled out immediately. It would bring misery to residents in Hammersmith & Fulham with unacceptable noise, traffic and pollution. The airports commission has now lost all credibility and it's time for the Government to say that the third runway is not a flyer."

The 2M councils overturned the 2010 third runway scheme in the High Court on environmental impact grounds. It was then ruled out by the Coalition Government on coming to power later that year.