



campaigning
by the
Railway Development
Society Limited

Policy Group

Commission Secretariat
Airports Commission,
6th Floor, Sanctuary Buildings,
20 Great Smith Street,
London
SW1P 3BT

Please Reply to:
30 The Mount
Worcester Park
Surrey
KT4 8UD

Tel: (020) 8394 0675
E-Mail: norman.bradbury@railfuture.org.uk

16th July 2013

Dear Sirs,

AVIATION COMMISSION CONSULTATION: LONG TERM CAPACITY OPTIONS

Railfuture is pleased to submit this consolidated national response, which has been prepared by the Policy Group with contributions from individual members.

Railfuture is a national voluntary organisation structured in England as twelve regional branches and two national branches for Scotland and Wales. We are Britain's leading independent rail lobby organization with a large number of affiliated Rail User Groups. Being funded entirely from membership subscriptions and donations, Railfuture enjoys non-partisan status and has no connections with political parties or organisations, trade unions or commercial interests. Railfuture is pro-rail but not anti-car or aviation.

We support the aim of promoting transport integration, particularly easy transfer and connections between transport modes.

Railfuture has no proposals for any new airports or runways but would prefer to make general comments and observations.

CAPACITY ISSUES: Concern is frequently expressed about the risk of London losing its pre-eminence as the aviation capital of Europe if we fail to increase airport capacity in the South East, notably at Heathrow, and the detrimental effect this could have on our economy. Comparisons between Heathrow and Schiphol airport with its four runways are used to justify arguments that Heathrow needs more runways. However, we note that, unlike Amsterdam, London is served by five airports, all of them connected by rail to central London. A total of six runways are therefore available, seven if Southend is included. As Sir Rod Eddington would say, "make better use of what you already have".

London could therefore be described as an aviation hub in its own right and given the sheer geographical size of the conurbation, it could be argued that it needs these airports for accessibility and to serve a regional need. If Heathrow were to be replaced by a new hub airport, how would all those users from the South East and West access the new airport, especially if it were located in the Thames estuary?

At the present time it is only Heathrow airport that is operating close to capacity and it would seem to make sense if flight paths to certain destinations were allocated to alternative airports. We note that less than half the capacity at Stansted for example, is currently used, even with its single runway and this poses the question as to why you would want to give it a second one. A contributory factor for its lack of popularity may be its lack of rail connections to the east, requiring travellers by rail to go into central London before heading out to Stansted and its relatively slow rail service from and to Central London.

www.railfuture.org.uk www.railfuturescotland.org.uk www.railfuturewales.org.uk
www.railwatch.org.uk

FLEXIBILITY: In order to optimise use of the capacity available at London's five airports, there is a clear need to greatly improve surface transport links between them, particularly by rail as this would provide the flexibility needed to reduce "inter lining" at Heathrow. Stansted could be directly linked to Heathrow via Crossrail for example. Although costly, the "Heathwick" idea could be worth investigating and it would certainly be less costly than a new hub airport elsewhere. Gatwick and Luton are already well connected via the Thameslink rail service and a shuttle service from the proposed new station at Brent Cross could provide a convenient connection between Luton and Heathrow.

Some new rail infrastructure would be needed, particularly the proposed western link from Heathrow to the Great Western main line. This would allow Crossrail or Heathrow Express services to be extended to places like Reading, Oxford, Newbury and Basingstoke, widening the catchment area. Stansted airport will not achieve its full potential until rail links are provided to the east through Braintree and the service to London is speeded up. Four tracking of the West Anglia main line would be required. Regulation would be needed to ensure airline routes were allocated to each airport so as to apportion available capacity in the most efficient way.

We note that the great majority of domestic flights do not serve Heathrow but already use London's other airports. We understand Gatwick and London City airport both currently have nearly as many daily domestic flights as Heathrow, for example.

BETTER USE OF AVAILABLE FLIGHT PATHS: We believe there is evidence that capacity is wasted due to some airlines operating flights at times when there is little demand simply to protect landing slots. Fewer flights using larger aircraft at times when there was greater demand would free up capacity.

REGIONAL AIRPORTS: We believe development of a new hub airport in the southeast would damage the viability of regional airports, as would routeing HS2 via Heathrow. Regional airports need better international links and this would help reduce the "North-South divide". We note that the runway at Birmingham airport is being extended to accommodate larger aircraft and there is even talk of a second runway there. This airport is only just over one hour by rail from central London even without HS2 and this could mean new routes to destinations in China and Brazil etc., could be operated from Birmingham. Manchester, Newcastle and Edinburgh should also be provided with better international links.

EUROSTAR HIGH SPEED RAIL SERVICES: Further pressure on London airports will be eased as soon as Eurostar services broaden their range of destinations, particularly to Amsterdam and Frankfurt. The coming of Deutsch Bahn high-speed services to London will have a similar effect.

DEMAND MANAGEMENT: The popularity of aviation and passenger growth seen until recently have been driven by cheap fares which are made possible by significant tax benefits enjoyed by the industry. Tax free fuel and zero rating for VAT gives aviation unfair advantages over other transport modes. The difficulties of obtaining international agreement prevents change to this situation and it is to be regretted that the EU Emissions Trading Scheme has been watered down, particularly since aviation is the most environmentally damaging transport mode.

This leaves Airport Passenger Duty as the only method by which demand could be managed. However, we understand that a charge of just £13 is applied for journeys up to 2,000 miles, that's 1.5p per mile, and this would have minimal, if any, effect on demand management. Railfuture is also concerned that much of the demand for cheap flights is related to short breaks in the sunshine and this has led to an annual aviation tourism deficit of about £18bn, a significant drain on the economy. We, therefore, support increases to APD and its retention as a demand management mechanism.

We believe that predictions for passenger growth are over optimistic, as increases in Oil prices will continue to exert a restraining influence on demand.

Yours faithfully,



Norman Bradbury
Railfuture
Head of Policy Group