

Memo to Railfuture

Airports Commission Report 1st July 2015; Quick Debrief

The Airports Commission Final Report was launched at the ICE at 1100 by Sir Howard Davies.

Three schemes evaluated:

Gatwick: Second runway (GAL)

Heathrow: Northwest runway scheme (LHR-NWR)

Heathrow: Extended Northern Runway (LHR-ENR)

The Commission concluded that all three schemes were credible but the new (separate) Northwest runway presents the strongest case in conjunction with a package of measures to address environmental and community impacts.

These measures are potentially relevant to Railfuture so they are listed below:

- A ban on all night flights (between 11:30pm and 06:00)
- A clear noise envelope (to be agreed and legally enforceable-no worse than present)
- A third runway should allow periods of predictable respite (to allow for increased resilience)
- Compensation for loss of homes – value + 25% + legal costs)
- £1bn community compensation fund and new noise aviation levy
- A community Engagement Board
- An independent aviation noise authority
- Training opportunities and apprenticeships for local people
- A major shift in market share for those working at and arriving at the airport should be incentivised, through measures including new rail infrastructure and a continuing focus on employee behaviour change. A congestion or access charge should also be considered (This also includes changes to car parking arrangements, particularly for staff)
- Additional operations at an expanded Heathrow must be contingent on acceptable performance on air quality
- A fourth runway should be firmly ruled out (for ever)

Airport access

The report itemises the following rail access options to Heathrow (all from London)

- LU Piccadilly Line
- Heathrow Connect
- Heathrow Express

Additional links proposed to increase rail market share

- Crossrail (from 2019)
- Southern Rail Access (from Waterloo via Staines)

- Western Rail Link to GWML then via Reading
- To HS2 via Crossrail and Old Oak Common

In fact £5bn of the £17bn cost quoted is in respect of transport links (including a substantial programme of road improvements generally local to Heathrow access, M25, M4 etc.

The report acknowledges also for all options the importance of background growth particularly on the Brighton Line via Gatwick.

However about half of the quoted benefits accrue to the UK regions in no small part on account of the schemes to increase domestic flights from 55 pairs currently to between 136 and 175, quoting particular support for the scheme from Scotland (Inverness, and Aberdeen) and Northern England. Domestic routes from Inverness, Teesside and Liverpool had been discontinued as a result of capacity constraints. This is likely to be a contentious area, as a significant reason for the decline of UK domestic air travel has been rail competition.

Railfuture's Reaction

I see little value in taking a position on the choice of options, lost causes are not our speciality. There are five areas where we might wish to attempt to ensure that rail commitment including background and other airport growth is delivered. These are discussed briefly below:

- Heathrow: the accent is clearly focussed on environmental mitigation so is absolutely dependent on the new links proposed at Heathrow. We need to campaign to ensure these are built.
- Gatwick: Although not chosen could eventually be chosen at the next political stage. The Commission has not ruled out Gatwick. Concerns here are in the area of BML capacity and resilience. Background growth is very high here so this should remain a Railfuture campaigning issue
- Stansted: Not an runway option but in the short and medium term this is where the growth will be (along with Gatwick) as Stansted has the runway capacity. Any delay beyond the quoted 10 years to build at Heathrow will also be pertinent in this context. Oddly, Stansted is potentially the real winner in the short and medium term. We should continue to campaign for a proper upgrade for the Stansted route.
- Other links: Regional airports will continue to grow so rail links here remain important, and we should continue our campaigning for such links.
- Eurostar: This option has not been particularly discussed by the Commission, despite relatively high market shares to Paris and Brussels. The context of the case for Heathrow is potential new routes from Asia to London rather than other European cities and also importantly interchanging for domestic routes and European destinations. Eurostar is not seen as particularly relevant in this specific context. We should continue to campaign in this underperforming area but probably not in the context of Heathrow.

Given the interest in this subject it is important that we have a credible and consistent position so I hope that quick note assists with that process. I would like to add this as an agenda item to the Policy Directorate International meeting on 1st August.

Ian Brown CBE FCILT 1st July 2015.