

Minister challenged to spell out Heathrow noise impacts



Council leaders have called on the Transport Secretary to say how many years of extra noise he expects local communities to suffer if a third Heathrow runway is built.

The government has so far refused to release updated noise assessments for the four years following the new runway's expected opening in 2026. These were prepared for the revised draft National Planning Statement (NPS) but not included as part of the October 2017 consultation.

Chris Grayling told the Transport Select Committee in February that there would be a

'short period of time' when the airport would have an expanded noise footprint at the airport.

The government has previously stated that Heathrow with a third runway would be 'quieter than today.'

Cllr Ray Puddifoot, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said: "We are already concerned that local people were expected to have their say on a third runway without information on new flight paths. Now they won't know, if they are affected, how long the noise misery will last. This failure to provide this basic information makes the government's consultation meaningless.

"The case for the third runway is not backed by the facts and the information provided for residents in the consultation has been wholly inadequate. We are now increasingly confident that parliament will recognise these shortcomings and vote against expansion at Heathrow."

Cllr Ravi Govindia, Leader of Wandsworth Council, said: "Local people have a right to know what these increased noise levels would be, how long they would last and how many people's lives would be affected.

"If he is placing his hopes on a new generation of quieter aircraft he should tell us when he expects these to come into service. We know that this can't be before 2030 at the earliest so that's at least four years of extra noise misery for the people affected."

The councils have highlighted the lack of detail on noise in a further submission to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into Heathrow expansion.



Cllr Simon Dudley, Leader of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, said: “The government has a duty to take action that reduces the impact of any harm caused by expansion. They know that a third runway would bring more noise and they have the information that proves it. Yet they refuse to release the information and decline to accept their responsibility for dealing with it.”

The councils have also questioned the reliability of government forecasts for the number of domestic flights that could be guaranteed as part of a ‘deal’ for residents in other parts of the UK.

The Secretary of State has suggested that 15 per cent of the additional capacity could be reserved for routes serving airports within the UK.

Cllr Paul Hodgins, Leader of Richmond Council, said: “The minister’s optimism on the number of domestic connections that would be possible with a third runway is not backed by any hard evidence.

“The draft NPS contains no detail on how a commitment to ‘ring-fence’ new slots for internal flights might work. So it is a ‘commitment’ which can’t be taken seriously.

“There is nothing to show what such a commitment might cost the taxpayer, nothing to show the impact on other UK airports particularly if another 40,000 flights take off from Heathrow, nothing to show the impact of noise and nothing to show how it might be enforced.

“Wherever people live they have a duty to be given the facts about expansion. Without these it will be impossible for any government to claim that people have been properly consulted before a decision is made and parliament should vote it down, giving a clear signal that Gatwick is the only airport that could be expanded.”