

Flying high and intelligently to cut noise

I am urging the government and aviation industry to use modern technology to save fuel, cut costs, reduce noise and improve the passenger experience.

The central point of the idea is to eliminate the stacks around busy airports, especially Heathrow near my constituency.

Today when the airport gets busy planes are asked to circulate above the London area, flying around in circles, gradually dropping height until a runway is available. This increases the amount of noise on the ground substantially, increases the time when an accident or failure to the plane risks damage and death on the ground below in heavily developed and congested areas, and subjects passengers to variable delays they were not expecting.

The way to eliminate the stack is to use modern GPS, communications to inbound aircraft and computer runway planning to ensure one plane at a time arrives ready to land without joining a stack. Incoming planes can be given single accurate timings to land, and vary their speed at height over the Atlantic or the continent accordingly so they arrive on time. Sometimes long haul flights will be told to slowdown. They can give their passengers a precise flight landing time, and can save fuel as they make slower progress to the airport. For shorter haul this might be done by keeping the plane on the ground at departure until its flight time coincides with runway availability, or might entail letting it take off with a lower average speed to destination.

Where an unforeseen event requires a landing by a plane without an approved slot this should usually be accommodated at a less busy airport. Obviously life threatening disasters would lead to an override of the system if it is thought using a busy runway could offer the chance of saving lives.

Removing the stack means

Greater certainty about arrival times for passengers

Less fuel use for the planes that are asked to fly slower rather than stacking

Less risk to the populations around busy airports

Less noise from the skies

I am told work is underway to give pilots more warning of landing slots and to slow planes that otherwise would have to join a stack. Lets hope they speed this work up.