

Statement to Parliament: Aviation update 24 October 2017

This time last year, the government selected a new north-west runway at Heathrow as its preferred scheme for delivering much-needed new airport capacity in the south-east. This was a move made in the national interest – to spread the opportunity to travel and trade throughout the UK, through more flights between our global aviation hub and our regional airports.

In the last 12 months we have published a [draft Airports National Policy Statement \(NPS\)](#), and been listening to views through a [major consultation exercise](#). We have also published a new National air quality plan and taken steps to address the impact of noise around our airports, which are set out below. Heathrow Airport themselves have been working with airlines to bring down the cost of the proposed scheme, in line with the ambition I set out to keep landing charges as close as possible to current levels. Now that the select committee has been reconstituted, we remain on track to bring forward a final Airports National Policy Statement for a vote in this House in the first half of next year.

Today (24 March 2017) I am publishing [updated aviation demand forecasts](#) which show that the need for additional runway capacity is even greater than originally thought. They show that all 5 of London's main airports will be completely full by the mid-2030s, and 4 of them within a decade. Crucially, they also show us that the north-west runway scheme at Heathrow is the one which delivers the greatest benefits soonest. In addition, it continues to offer the greatest choice in terms of destinations and frequency of vital long-haul routes. Heathrow handles more freight by value than all other UK airports combined and it has superior connections to the rest of the UK through road, rail and domestic flights.

Today I am beginning a [short period of consultation on the revised draft Airports NPS](#) to allow people to consider these updated forecasts, alongside other new evidence which was unavailable at the time of the initial consultation. This includes the [National air quality plan](#) which was published in July 2017. Updated analysis of this shows that the Heathrow north-west runway scheme can be delivered without the UK breaching its air quality obligations. We will continue to ensure that if expansion goes ahead at Heathrow, it is delivered according to air quality obligations through a suitable package of mitigation and policy measures.

This period of consultation will focus on those elements of the draft Airports NPS affected by the updated evidence and will run for 8 weeks until 19th December. I have asked [Sir Jeremy Sullivan](#) to continue in his role as an independent adviser to oversee this process, and I am grateful to him for his work.

The [revised draft Airports NPS](#) has been laid in the library of the House and will also receive select committee scrutiny. The recommendations they make

will be an important consideration as we move forward. As required by [section 9\(6\) of the Planning Act 2008](#), I am specifying a 'relevant period' for Parliamentary scrutiny. This will start today and end on 23 March 2018.

Alongside this, our work to develop a new aviation strategy will look beyond a potential new runway at Heathrow, and will set out an ambitious long-term vision for the sector, which will support economic growth across the whole of the UK. In addition to considering how we can make best use of existing capacity at all airports around the country, it will look at any future need for new capacity away from Heathrow, whilst tackling environmental impacts.

The impact of noise from aircraft is a national issue, and alongside the initial consultation on the draft Airports NPS, we also consulted on proposals to support modernisation of the way UK airspace is managed. Today I am also publishing the [response to that consultation](#), and confirm we will be establishing a new independent noise body to ensure communities around our airports have a say in airspace changes which may affect them. Along with a new call-in power for the Secretary of State for Transport on airspace changes of national importance, this is designed to rebuild the trust lost in the industry by communities and provide democratic accountability for the most significant decisions.

In addition, the measures I am outlining today will enable us to make much greater use of new technology, giving us the ability to manage our airspace more effectively to tackle delays, cut emissions and reduce the need for stacking above our busiest airports. They will also help support the airspace changes we need in our skies to meet future demand – including a potential third runway at Heathrow.

[Today's announcement](#) marks another important step as we work to ensure the UK has the connectivity we need right now to lead on the world stage.