

The Heathrow decision

I left making up my mind on how to vote on Heathrow until the debate. I wanted to hear from constituents, and also wished to get better assurances from those involved in the project concerning aircraft noise.

I received fifteen times as many emails urging me to vote for the airport expansion as against. Most of these were the common format email drafted by the pro Heathrow campaign, which clearly spoke for a number of my constituents.

The main objections came from those who find the current noise levels unacceptable. I agree, and have been pressing the airport, the airlines and NATs to take more action to control noise. All this relates to noise at the current airport, with its current pattern of flights. One of the possible advantages of installing more runway capacity will be longer night time hours when no flights will be permitted, with more capacity to handle incoming flights at the end of the night time ban period each day.

There will be further opportunities to press the interested parties on noise as they move to the next stage of their project, seeking planning permission and making the necessary environmental filings. Both Heathrow itself and the government have said they are working on steeper descents and ascents to lessen noise further away from the airport, quieter planes, more enforcement against noisy planes and pilots, and a new examination of current routes. The Secretary of State confirmed that digital technology will allow the usual elimination of the stack, as I have urged.