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The Airports Commission Report: Carbon Emissions, Air Quality and Noise

In advance of the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) evidence session on 30 November 2016 I am writing to set out how the recommendations of the Committee's interim report *The Airports Commission Report: Carbon Emissions, Air Quality and Noise* have informed the government's selection of a preferred scheme to meet the need for additional airport capacity in the South East, as announced on 25 October 2016. As the Committee suggested in its interim report, these recommendations will need to be considered as part of the Government's consultation on a draft National Policy Statement. However, I am keen to set out in this letter the latest position on the three key areas considered by the Committee in its review.

Carbon

In reaching a view on its preferred scheme the government agreed with the Airports Commission's (AC) assessment that the Heathrow Northwest Runway scheme can be delivered within the UK's carbon obligations.

The government believes that action at a global level is the best means of addressing carbon emissions from aviation.

For example, the UK has worked very hard to reach a major global climate deal through the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), agreed in Montreal on 6 October 2016. This is the first worldwide scheme to address carbon emissions in any single sector and sends a strong signal that international aviation is committed to taking action to tackle climate change.

With 66 States, including the UK, already volunteering to participate from the start of the scheme in 2021, and further States entering on a mandatory basis from 2027, it is currently estimated that the measure will offset around 80% of international aviation emissions above 2020 levels over its lifetime. As with the 2015 UNFCCC Paris Agreement, there is an inbuilt review mechanism that can improve the scheme over time. The UK's focus will now be on ensuring the scheme is implemented successfully across the world.

The AC also engaged with the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) as part of their extensive work on carbon emissions in preparation for their final report.

The government values the CCC's independent advice on climate change. Specifically, it set the level of the fifth carbon budget, 2028-2032, in line with the CCC's recommendation - equivalent to a 57% reduction by 2030 on 1990 levels. The fifth carbon budget was also set in line with the CCC's advice that it should not include international aviation emissions at this time.

The government is also considering available policy measures to address the climate change impacts of aviation. We plan to develop an aviation strategy to replace the aviation policy framework, setting out a framework for the future of the UK aviation sector, including environmental impacts. We have begun scoping this work and engaging with industry, including organisations such as 'Sustainable Aviation' on what it should look like.

Among available policy measures, sustainable aviation fuels are of strategic importance to reducing carbon emissions in the aviation sector. We are working on ways to encourage the uptake of sustainable aviation fuels, including making them eligible for support under the Renewable Transport Fuel Obligation.

We have also taken steps to increase supply of the most sustainable biofuels through the Advanced Biofuel Demonstration Competition. The Competition is currently providing £25m of matched capital grant funding which will see three world-first demonstration-scale plants producing biofuel in the UK by 2018. Options for a second follow up competition are currently being developed and include, among other things, targeting aviation biofuels.

Air quality

Air quality is a significant national health issue that this government takes very seriously.

As announced in December 2015, we accepted the EAC's recommendation to test the Airports Commission's analysis against the government's Air Quality Plan which was published on 17 December 2015.

This work was published alongside the government's announcement of its preferred scheme and confirmed the AC's conclusion that a new runway can be delivered without impacting the UK's compliance with air quality limit values for nitrogen dioxide.

Since this work was carried out, new international evidence on vehicle emissions forecasts has been released. Further work is needed to understand the implications of this evidence, but our initial assessment suggests that revised forecasts would be likely to be within the range of scenarios already considered by our re-analysis.

You will be aware of the recent judgment in the ClientEarth judicial review of the government's Air Quality Plan. We are carefully considering what this means for the airport capacity programme.

In addition, as I announced on 25 October, my Department has embarked on a joint project with Defra and the Treasury to identify further ways in which we can tackle this issue. By the time a new runway opens in the next decade, we intend to have made very substantial progress in tackling air quality challenges across our nation as a whole.

Heathrow Airport will also be expected to implement an extensive package of air quality mitigation measures. The precise details of the package will be determined through the planning process, according to the framework set out in the Airports National Policy Statement (NPS), which will be subject to public consultation.

The government therefore believes that the Heathrow Northwest Runway scheme could be delivered without impacting on the UK's compliance with air quality limit values, with a suitable package of policy and mitigation measures.

Ultimately, final development consent will only be granted if we are satisfied that, with mitigation, the scheme will not impact on the UK's compliance with its legal obligations on air quality.

The health impacts of air pollutants due to additional capacity were included by the AC in their economic appraisal. Their approach used standard "damage costs" to put a monetary value on increased emissions.

As set out in the *Further Review and Sensitivities Report*, which was published on 25 October, my Department has run a further sensitivity using Defra's interim guidance which presents updated values for the health impacts of emissions, and methodologies for assessing exposure of local communities. This shows that the health impacts from increased emissions at an expanded Heathrow could be lower than estimated by the AC.

In relation to the transport links to the expanded airport, we will be setting out the surface access requirements as part of our National Policy Statement. Heathrow Airport Limited's surface access plan will help to manage the transport impacts of the new capacity and it has already committed to specific targets for increasing levels of public transport use by airport passengers and employees. Heathrow Airport Limited has also pledged that there will be no increase in road traffic due to expansion.

The Government has also been clear that the airport will meet the costs of the surface access improvements necessary to allow expansion of the airport and it will also contribute to the costs of building the proposed new Western Rail Link and Southern Rail Access.

Noise

The AC undertook a thorough assessment of the noise impacts of each of its shortlisted schemes.

The assessment used a range of metrics to provide a rounded view of the potential impacts of any proposal for expansion. These metrics were subject to prior consultation and included both conventional metrics, which assess noise levels over a period of time (daytime, night time and 24-hour), and more innovative metrics that assess the number of times a location is overflowed by aircraft whose noise impacts exceed a specified level.

The AC also assessed the relative performance of each scheme across this range of metrics against a future baseline of no expansion in 2030, 2040 and 2050.

We stand behind the AC's assessment which is robust and consistent with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UK government appraisal guidance.

In 2014/15, IPSOS/MORI conducted, on behalf of the Department for Transport, a survey on noise attitudes which focused on noise from civil aviation, near to major airports in England. The results of the survey are currently being analysed with a view to publishing a report early next year.

The government believes in the principle of an independent aviation noise commission and will consult on this shortly. Such a body could usefully

commission such surveys on a more regular basis. Research is one of the functions which the Airports Commission proposed it should have.

The AC also recommended a ban on night flights at Heathrow. The government will seek a ban on scheduled night flights of six and a half hours. Legally, consideration of any ban, and the rules around its operation, will be subject to the ICAO Balanced Approach to noise management, which includes a requirement for consultation with local communities and other interested parties.

Additionally, the Government will require Heathrow Airport to develop a Community Engagement Board, including the appointment of an appropriate independent chair, in consultation with local authorities and local communities and for this body to be in place to participate in the consultation on a draft Airports National Policy Statement.

As I confirmed in my oral statement, the Government will lay a draft National Policy Statement in the new year. In line with our legal obligations, this will be subject to a full and fair public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny. The final National Policy Statement will not be designated without a vote in the House of Commons.

The National Policy Statement will be supported by an Appraisal of Sustainability that examines the social, economic and environmental impacts of the preferred scheme, including air quality, carbon and noise. The public will have the opportunity to comment on this during consultation on the draft National Policy Statement.

Heathrow will also be required to complete a number of environmental assessments to support its application for development consent. These include an Environmental Impact Assessment, an Environmental Statement, a Statement on Compliance with the Habitats Directive and a Flood Risk Assessment.

I look forward to appearing before you on 30 November when I will be able to provide further details.



Rt Hon Chris Grayling MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT