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Call for Evidence

Airport expansion and climate and nature targets

We understand the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) is seeking views on the Government's plans to support the expansion of airport capacity, including a third runway at London Heathrow, as long as strict environmental and climate commitments at met.

On behalf of the Thames Valley Chamber of Commerce (TVCC), we would like to comment on some of the EACs questions in support of Heathrow and their plans to reach the environmental and climate commitments/targets.

1. **Airport expansion, economic growth, and improved connectivity:** Expansion at London Heathrow is a key factor in delivering the Government's ambitions for economic growth, with the UK's only hub airport – with global connections - having a wider impact/benefit to regional economies. Appropriate increased airport capacity enhances connectivity, creates jobs, boosts local economies, and improves global competitiveness. This leads to increased trade, inward investment, tourism, and business opportunities. As an essential component and driver of meeting strict environmental and climate commitments, we add the need to:
 1. Secure improved connectivity to the airport, including the timely delivery of the [Western Rail Link to London Heathrow](#) (WRLtH) scheme, in advance of any expansion (including runway construction works). This will help to ensure that there is no increase in impacts; mitigate impacts of current airport and achieve the modal shift of travel to/from Heathrow before runway construction starts and so reduce the travel and economic disruption impacts of construction, e.g., closures of M25.
 2. Consider, the impacts of passenger and worker travel to Heathrow/airports and the required need for mitigation (e.g., 84+million passengers forecast for 2025, 76,000 employed at Heathrow - 2023 figures).
 3. Recognise and mitigate the impact on surface access demand of passenger growth arising from improved efficiency of operations and size of planes, as well as from major works
 4. Support public transport (rail/bus) connectivity as the most green-friendly options for mass travel to/from our airports.
 5. Set clear and ambitious targets that are, for example, a minimum nil growth on existing impacts and some reductions, including: net reduction of individual travel to airport of any sort (except walking and cycling); reduction of car parking on and around airport (min. present provision); modal shift of travel to and from airport for passengers and workforce (e.g., Network Rail figures for WRLtH road to rail are estimated at 20% of passengers from Reading and Slough); air quality stability or improvement in a defined radius; congestion reduction (peak and non-peak hours).

2. **The sector has a clear net zero plan:** We understand the aviation sector (see for example: [IATA](https://www.sustainableaviation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SA9572_2023CO2RoadMap_Brochure_v4.pdf) and also: https://www.sustainableaviation.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SA9572_2023CO2RoadMap_Brochure_v4.pdf) has a clear and established plan to reach net zero (by 2050) through, for example:
 1. Efficiency - New aircraft and airspace design
 2. New technology – e.g., Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and hydrogen-fuelled flight
 3. Greenhouse Gas Removals (GGRs)
1. **The Sustainable Aviation Roadmap proves that net zero and growth can go hand in hand:** We believe that airport expansion and growth cannot be a choice between the environment and economic growth - we must deliver for both. The UK has the potential, and should look to be, world-leading in delivering airport expansion that is sustainable, across economic, social, and environmental parameters, and responsibly delivered within strict environmental limits and the highest 'green credentials' across supply (including securing reliable green, such as solar, power supplies/production and water systems to reduce on-site and offsite flooding/re-use of surface and grey water) and construction (e.g., achieving highest BREEAM standards for environmental efficiency of new build in both construction and running). Any airport expansion project should, and will only, go ahead if it meets the strict government rules on noise (including quieter aeroplanes), air quality and carbon emissions (see below), set out in the Airports National Policy Statement.
2. **Any airport expansion will be subject to robust tests within the planning process and must prove it will not exceed CCC budgets:** We understand the Climate Change Committee (CCC) has set ambitious emissions reduction targets (e.g., which will see emissions from aviation fall by 36% relative to 2023 levels) as part of an economy-wide transition to net zero by 2050. Government's continued investment in our growth-driving sectors, many of which are world leading in the Thames Valley, will enable the UK to deliver the significant technological advancements and policy measures to achieve our net-zero goals. Most notably, this included increased use of SAF championed by companies, and TVCC members, <https://velocys.com/> (see also [HERE](#)). We understand the government has also implemented a robust net zero transition plan – the Jet Zero Strategy – which sets a binding requirement for UK aviation to achieve net zero by 2050.
3. **Government and industry must work together to unlock critical policy developments:** We support government in their efforts to continue, at pace, on the SAF revenue certainty mechanism. This will be critical to continue to scale up fuel production domestically. This builds on the collaborative policy work which led to the [SAF mandate](#), updated in March of this year, and obligating the supply of an increasing amount of SAF in the overall UK aviation fuel mix, and; incentivising SAF supply through the award of tradeable certificates with a cash value.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Britton
Chief Executive Officer