

Mr Mike Forster
Business Strategy Director
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21 October 2005

Dear Mr Forster,

SWELTRAC comments on The Heathrow Master Plan

Thank you for sending SWELTRAC a copy of the Heathrow Master Plan. The document provides a clear statement of the present activities at Heathrow and the vision and planned developments in the future. The plans for Heathrow are in line with other published documents, in particular the 2003 white paper 'Future of Air Transport'.

The white paper reinforces the statement that Heathrow is of national importance as well as for London and the south east region. The Master Plan is based on the existing infrastructure, that is:

- 2 main runways,
- 5 Terminal buildings,
- 42,000 Car parking spaces
- Existing conditions and restraints for night movements

The issues about which SWELTRAC members are concerned are predominantly for surface transport to the airport, employment, air quality and the environment.

There are 3 issues with regard to airport planning which have not been addressed in the master plan.

1. The first is the methodology of the Government to use a 'predict and provide' philosophy for airport planning when it has stopped using it for road planning. Hence there is no assumed fiscal or congestion constraint on the growth of air travel.
2. The second is that there is no mention of the longer term effect of increasing fuel costs which may well make a significant change in the future travel demand analysis.
3. The third is the size of new aeroplanes such as the A380. This is included in the analysis for passenger flows and flight movements for long haul routes, but it could be that there will be greater use of such aircraft in the plan period on short haul routes. This does not seem to have been taken into consideration and could effect further the average passenger numbers per movement.

The Master plan allows for:

- 87 million passengers per year in 2015. The present number is 67m.
- 60,000 direct on-airport jobs in 2015. The present figure is 68,400.
- 480,00 air traffic movements per year. There were 469,700 in 2004

It is noted in the plan that the average number of passengers per flight was 143 in 2004 and is expected to be 181 by 2015. Both these figures are some 30% greater than competing airports in Europe and therefore the Master Plan concludes that

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there is a need for extra runway capacity in order to remain competitive with Frankfurt and Paris.

Heathrow is active in planning and improving surface access. The Master Plan mentions Heathrow Express, Heathrow Connect, the sponsorship of bus routes, car share schemes and other measures to assist both airport workers and travellers to access Heathrow by means other than the private car. Heathrow monitors access figures by mode and tables in the plan show limited success in creating mode shift. Some 61% of travellers use either a private car or taxi and 72 % of staff use private cars. With all the other demand for road space in the area and from air freight traffic in particular the road network is suffering increased congestion. Improved bus and train services are clearly needed to allow for the increase in traveller numbers that are expected. The Connect service is being launched with the specific target of helping airport workers and paragraph 8.19 makes a very strong statement and commitment to the AirTrack project. Both of these would provide an increase in surface access capacity.

SWELTRAC members remain very concerned about the surface access to Heathrow. Even with the Connect services and AirTrack the demand for road traffic access both for passengers and freight to the airport and its associated businesses will be much higher than at present. An increase of passenger movements to 87million from the present 65million implies a 34% increase, and a similar increase in road trips may be expected. The success to date of creating a mode switch to public transport has been very limited. In the short term bus services also need to increase and to operate at the times during which the airport is operational. Without extending bus timings as well as frequency the airport workers may have little option other to use cars, as so much of airline work is shift work, with early starts and late finishes.

There is mention in the Master plan of a longer term aspiration of a third runway and a fifth terminal. A third runway would extend the noise and pollution problems to an even wider area as well as requiring demolition of houses. The additional traffic would be over more residential areas, and create worse travel conditions for a large area of west and south west London. From an overall planning viewpoint any higher level of concentration of airline activities at Heathrow is undesirable. In the main our Borough members strongly oppose any expansion beyond the 2 runway and 5 terminal scenario.

The plan asks direct questions from the consultees. In brief SWELTRAC replies are:

1. We agree with the general level of detail and structure of the plan
2. We agree with the statements about the importance of Heathrow in terms of travel for Londoners, those in the south east and probably for the whole country. It also acts as a transit and interchange airport for travellers within Europe, many of whom will spend some time in London.
3. Yes
4. Yes
5. The modelling and forecasting of airline traffic is not within our expertise. The white paper has covered this. We are concerned though that future conditions are unpredictable and in particular recent events may well increase fuel cost to the extent of at least reducing the traffic growth rates to a lower level. Whilst in recent years air passenger numbers have risen at about 5% pa, in the longer term an expectation of much more than the GDP rate is unlikely.

We presume that sensitivity analysis has been carried out on the traffic figures.

The master plan makes mention of these two major investments. At a later date there would be much discussion on the need for them. For the present time we wish to record serious concerns on environmental and road traffic grounds for the construction of a third runway. Even if the problems of noise and air quality are overcome with improved technology there would still be opposition on planning, safety and local traffic grounds.

6. We agree the aim of development within the existing infrastructure
7. Chapter 7 is a series of statements about the measures that BAA is already carrying out to mitigate problems. There are active strategies for Air Quality, Noise, Biodiversity, Water Quality, and Waste Management.
8. In a similar way the Chapter 8 on surface access is a good statement of what BAA has done and is doing to assist in improving surface access. There has been a small but continuous increase in travellers reaching the airport by rail and underground. Rail and UG are much less well used by staff and this confirms the need for the recently introduced Connect service and BAA's longer term support for Crossrail and AirTrack.
9. The issue of the need for additional runway capacity is the big item in the master plan. It seems logical to continue to safeguard the land that might be needed. It is noted though that this safeguarding does NOT include any provision of land for surface access. It is not clear whether a new terminal is needed to serve this runway. If it is, it is to be hoped that the location of any new terminal would be located near to the present railway access line. There is mention of a Terminal 6 in the report but that is not specifically stated to be for the new third runway.
10. We would like to see a commitment for much greater use of public transport to the airport, both for travellers and airport workers. We estimate that the 60,000 on site workers would make some 26.4 million single trips to and from the airport, whilst the travellers make 67million. This confirms the need for greater concentration of effort to reduce access by car for on site airport workers from its present 72 % level.

We look forward to continuing our involvement with the several BAA groups and forums to assist in improving surface access to the airport.

Yours sincerely,

Robert Mansfield
SWELTRAC Manager