

Press Release

Labour: Four Tests on Heathrow expansion not met

Today [20/6/18], Labour has announced that the Government's final proposal for an Airports National Policy Statement, laid before Parliament earlier this month, fails to meet Labour's Four Tests for Heathrow expansion.

Labour's support for proposed Heathrow expansion has always been conditional on four well-established tests being met:

1. That increased capacity will be delivered
2. That we can meet our CO2 reduction commitments
3. Minimise noise and local environmental impact
4. Benefits of expansion felt across the regions of the U.K., not just the South East and London

Labour's analysis of the National Policy Statement finds that none of these tests have been met.

As a result of the government's proposed Heathrow expansion failing to deliver on the Four Tests, Labour opposes this expansion plan and is calling for a free vote for all parties on the National Policy Statement (New Runway Capacity and Infrastructure At Airports in the South of England) when it comes to Parliament next week.

Andy McDonald MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, said:

"Labour has always argued that airport expansion must meet our four tests. After careful and rigorous consideration, we are clear that they have not been met.

"Heathrow expansion is incompatible with our environmental and climate change obligations and cannot be achieved without unacceptable impacts on local residents. The improved connectivity to the regions of the UK cannot be guaranteed and there are unanswered questions on the costs to the public purse and the deliverability of the project.

"We support vital investment in our country's transport infrastructure, but every investment must be tested on whether it provides real value for money and sustainability. A third runway at Heathrow fails this test."

Ends

NOTES TO EDITORS

Test 1: Is there robust and convincing evidence that the required increase in aviation capacity will be delivered?

Test Failed

The revised NPS does not provide sufficient guarantee that a third runway is in fact deliverable, which risks the entire economic benefit of the project.

Significant unanswered logistical questions remain, including problems associated with the M25 and the new rail scheme options and their funding, as well as the investments required to address concerns over local air pollution. The Government has acknowledged these issues in its revised NPS but has delegated responsibility for providing solutions to Heathrow itself, which it has so far failed to do so. Combined with the certainty of legal challenge through judicial review, these concerns amount to serious doubt as to whether this proposal will ever in fact deliver the required capacity.

Further, in 2015/16, a cost recovery clause was agreed with Heathrow in the Statement of Principles. Subparagraph 2.1.6 reserves Heathrow Airport Ltd.'s rights to pursue "legal and equitable remedies (including cost recovery)" in the event of "an alternative scheme being preferred by the Secretary of State or Government" and/or if Government withdraws its support "for aviation expansion for Heathrow Airport". There appears to be no end date to this agreement. This means that taxpayers could be left picking up a multi-million pound bill, if the plan is approved and the Government does not proceed with developing the Heathrow North West runway scheme. The Government has tied itself into a considerable liability risk.

Test 2: Does the proposal support efforts to reduce CO2 emissions from aviation and is it consistent with meeting our legally binding climate change obligations?

Test Failed

The Department for Transport's projections show that a new runway at Heathrow will directly lead to at least a 3.3MtCO₂ breach of the 37.5MtCO₂ limit for 2050 set by the Civil Aviation Authority without new policies to mitigate emissions.

The revised NPS simply restates the Airport Commission's report which concluded that expansion *could* take place without breaching the CAA's commitments. The Heathrow third runway option gave rise to the highest level of additional carbon emissions of all the options considered by the Airports Commission, but Parliament is now being asked to support this expansion without any new emissions mitigation framework, nor corresponding strategy or policies. Without these, the proposal is simply not consistent with the obligations set out in the 2008 Climate Change Act.

The absence of a reasonable plan to mitigate the extra emissions arising from a new runway means that the revised NPS would be in breach of section 5(8) of the Planning Act 2008, which would invite legal challenge and further exacerbate the risks set out in relation to the first test.

Test 3: Have local noise and environmental impacts been adequately considered and will they be managed and minimised?

Test Failed

The Government has not proposed clear targets for noise mitigation, nor has it taken sufficient action to ensure enough cleaner cars, the principal source of local air

pollution, will be introduced in time to mitigate the risks of Heathrow enlargement, nor is there sufficient clarity or assurance on the airport's alternative transport access means.

The Government's own figures indicate that 92,000 more people will be affected by noise in 2030 than if the third runway at Heathrow is not built. 700 extra planes a day would use Heathrow. Some of the associated noise could be mitigated through more respite mechanisms, like using and rotating multiple flight paths, and with a tougher night-flight regime. The Transport Select Committee called on the Government to set clear noise targets, in order that such mechanisms had to be considered, but in the revised NPS the Government is not proposing any new targets.

The NPS merely states that "the Secretary of State will consider air quality impacts over the wider area likely to be affected, as well as in the vicinity of the scheme. In order to grant development consent, the Secretary of State will need to be satisfied that, with mitigation, the scheme would be compliant with legal obligations that provide for the protection of human health and the environment". This provides no indication as to how the air pollution can be managed. Much of the risk of additional air pollution is largely outside of Heathrow's control. Air pollution is an ongoing public health crisis that leads to approximately 50,000 premature deaths each year and has seen the government repeatedly taken to court over their failure to achieve legal levels of air quality. In the absence of a Government strategy to achieve legal levels of air quality across the country and lack of a plan for areas impacted by Heathrow expansion, we remain unconvinced that air quality impacts will be mitigated in the affected areas.

Test 4: Are the benefits of expansion to be shared in every corner of the country, not just in the South East of England, and will regional airports be supported too?

Test Not Yet Met

The revised NPS says that, if the third runway is built, up to 15% of all new routes will need to be reserved for the domestic market. The Government says that Public Service Obligations (PSO) will ensure compliance. Labour is concerned that *up to* 15% could mean as little as 1%. In addition, PSOs apply to cities rather than airport specific locations. The Government's stated case for expanding Heathrow is dependent on a number of other conditions being met, including measures to constrain growth at regional airports in order to ensure that Heathrow expansion can meet the UK's climate change obligations. On the one hand, in the NPS the Secretary of State has relied on restricting other airports to claim that Heathrow's expansion is compatible with our climate change obligations while on the other hand, in 'Making the Best Use of Our Existing Runways', he has asserted that airport capacity can be increased across the UK as a whole. The two outcomes are mutually incompatible.

In the absence of any mechanism to guarantee domestic slots, in addition to the potential restrictions on the use of regional airports that would be required to achieve the UK's climate change obligations, Labour is not satisfied that Heathrow expansion is commensurate with expansion benefitting the whole of the UK.

