

UK Airport Strategy and the role of Rotorcraft

Dear Sirs,

I write on behalf of the UK helicopter and rotorcraft sector, in response to the request for comments on the emerging thinking set out in Sir Howard Davies's speech of 7th October.

Our principal comment is that when the Airports Commission publishes its findings at the end of this year, regardless of the detail outlined therein, it should acknowledge that helicopters and future rotorcraft have a part to play within any UK air transport strategy.

As we understand it, the Commission's remit was to make recommendations on how to maintain the UK's position as a hub for international air traffic.

Modern and emerging helicopter technologies and operational procedures are already revolutionising operations elsewhere in the world. In the USA for example, simultaneous non-interfering airport approaches between rotorcraft and fixed-wing aircraft are becoming routine. If in the UK we ignore the advantages that such developments could bring, we will do so to our financial and commercial disadvantage.

The next 20 years will see the introduction of efficient and versatile rotorcraft, capable of transporting people and freight in a far more convenient way than has been the available so far. Prototypes of all these aircraft are flying now and a commercial tilt-rotor is expected to be certified in 2016.

Without proper integration of helicopter and rotorcraft facilities within UK airports in future, maintaining our position as a hub for international traffic will be harder.

This is why it is critically important that rotorcraft be included in future UK airport plans.

Yours sincerely,

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