

EANAG

Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group

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28 October 2013

The Airports Commission

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Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group (EANAG) is very disappointed that the Commission is proposing new runways in the south-east, putting demands of the aviation industry above the welfare of many thousands of residents in the London area. It is apparent that the Commission has been swayed by the many aviation and related business organisations which are each able to devote resources to expressing their demands. Environmental groups such as EANAG are necessarily at a disadvantage in arguing their case, simply because, while representing the interests of thousands of residents, there are relatively very few such groups and their resources are very limited.

It has always been clear that the advantage for BA in its take-over of bmi was that it could replace underused European flights with new long-haul flights, and at the last HACC meeting on 18 September, that committee was informed that BA had created a slot for a new flight to Guang-Zhou by doing that. There remains substantial similar capacity to create flights to new long-haul destinations by reducing the number of flights to British and European destinations accessible by train. Business users, as the Commission states, are also using low-cost flights to keep costs down, and that fills capacity at the airports which low-cost airlines use, rather than showing a demand for capacity at crowded airports such as Heathrow.

The argument that new capacity is needed to reach new long-haul destinations is a false one.

A third runway at Heathrow would be a disaster for west London, imposing significant levels of noise and pollution on an area 50% greater than currently, to the north or south of the present affected area, depending on where the runway was built. As the Commission is aware, already 725,500 residents suffer aircraft noise around Heathrow at 55db, the level the European Union says requires measures to reduce it or protect residents against it and this is 28% of all residents around any major European airport. The Commission's Emerging Thinking document treats the problem of climate change as one

that has to be weighed against the industry demand for expansion, but pays scant attention to the noise inflicted on the thousands of residents around airports.

Heathrow 's argument that fewer people are seriously affected by aircraft noise is hypocritical. The noise made by newer planes, in operation, is not significantly less than that made by the older ones. The A380, for example, may have been given a small quota count, but that is based on flying an empty plane in test conditions. In operation, loaded, it makes almost as much noise on landing as the 747 it replaces.

The Commission should stop citing 57db as the threshold for serious annoyance. Its paper on noise shows that it is well aware that the use of this level has been discredited by ANASE and related studies around other European airports, and that it is only in the interest of the aviation industry to continue to use it, while it is to the detriment of affected residents. The Commission should also bear in mind that it is the continuing noise as departing planes follow one another throughout the day that has sensitised many people who were not disturbed by the noise when there were fewer planes and the annual limit was 280 000 movements.

We hope that the Commission will reconsider its current view and conclude that further capacity is not needed for the industry to operate effectively, and that it will not propose the infliction of more aircraft noise on residents around airports.

EANAG could have made the above points at the Commission's meeting on 7 October. The Group feels that it should have been invited to that meeting.

Our response, and the name of our organisation as a responder, may be published by the Commission.


Secretary, Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group

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