

I would like to comment on the speech by Sir Howard Davies of 7th October which sets out the Airport Commission's emerging thinking on airport capacity in the UK.

Air travel inflicts locally severe noise on people on the ground and has a disproportionate effect on global warming because of the injection of carbon compounds in the high atmosphere. This was recognised in the DfT documents for the 2002 SERAS exercise.

The majority of air travel through UK airports is by UK residents for leisure, and as such it is discretionary as to whether the trip is made at all, the destination and to a some extent the airport used. Frequent flyers are responsible for a large proportion of air trips.

The Commission's analysis must probe whether the UK's business interests (as opposed to its leisure aspirations) require a wider network of destinations and 'hub' interconnectivity, and whether to achieve that leisure travel is also needed for viability of new routes. It is not sufficient to argue that UK business interest requires that the demand for air travel is accommodated, and the environmental impact is on balance acceptable

Air travellers should pay for the environmental impact they cause, and contribute to the infrastructure needed to accommodate new runway capacity. It is not acceptable for aviation carbon emissions to be regarded as acceptable if other sectors make compensating savings. Leisure air travellers cannot expect to have their infrastructure funded by the tax payer while, for example, occupiers of new dwellings fund new local schools, and rail commuters progressively pay the full cost of their journey to work.

The Commission's analysis must also consider in detail the practical implications of a new hub airport in a privatised and competitive London airport system. How could it be ensured that airlines would relocate, and what would be the consequences for the movement of jobs, labour and housing, and for new surface transport links.