

# Summary of non-technical responses to the Airports Commission's Emerging Thinking Consultation

The Airports Commission's Emerging Thinking consultation elicited over one hundred responses from a wide range of stakeholders. Eighty-five technical responses were received from institutions and members of the public. Technical responses have been published in full.

The remainder of the responses (23 in total) were largely non-technical. These were all received from members of the public. The majority voiced opposition to airport proposals and particularly those schemes which proposed development within the Thames Estuary region.

The non-technical responses are summarised in the following nine groups.

## **1. Opposes Thames Estuary and Hoo Peninsula developments**

Fourteen responses were received which specifically opposed Thames Estuary and Hoo Peninsula developments.

The majority of these responses cited environmental concerns as the main point of opposition, stating such factors as:

- loss of natural habitats;
- development of protected land and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI);
- destruction of a unique wetlands;
- the area exists as a recreational 'lung' for South East population;
- disruption of patterns of bird migration; and,
- the ongoing risk of flooding and tidal surges in the region.

Four responses drew attention to the threat of bird strike. The same number of responses raised the issue of high costs involved in such schemes.

Three responses argued that the Thames Estuary and Hoo Peninsula are unsuitable due to a lack of infrastructure (road, rail, river etc.). These responses claimed that the need to develop such infrastructure would lead to an escalation of costs and further environmental damage.

A further three responses claimed that the presence of existing industry:

- power stations;
- ports;
- gas terminals; and
- wind farms

prevents locating an airport in the Thames Estuary region. One such respondent claimed that the presence of industry already creates heavy traffic on the local road network.

Three responses made reference to the World War II ship SS Montgomery as preventing the location of airports in the region, as the sunken vessel remains laden with explosives.

Two responses cited fog as a major threat to development in the Thames Estuary, making flying (especially landing) highly dangerous.

Two responses stated strong opposition to Thames Estuary developments while other airport options, notably Stansted, Gatwick and Heathrow, remained possibilities. One such respondent claimed that the alternative options are potentially better schemes.

One response claimed that major airlines do not want to relocate to the Thames Estuary and that local employment benefits of a Thames Estuary development are inflated.

## **2. Opposes developments at Heathrow airport**

Three responses were received which opposed any development at Heathrow airport.

Two responses opposed a new runway at Heathrow airport on the grounds of pollution and the adverse impact on health. One of these responses elaborated their opposition on the grounds of noise and associated environmental factors. They also claimed that internet-based communication technology reduced the need for flights.

A further response opposed the closure of Heathrow and the development of an airport in the Thames Estuary, claiming that developers sought only to generate profits.

## **3. Promotes development at Manston**

One response promoted an airport at Manston with a direct high speed rail link to the Channel Tunnel.

## **4. Promotes development of RAF Lyneham**

One response claimed that RAF Lyneham would be an ideal site for an airport, as:

- it is no longer used by the RAF;
- it has a long runway;
- it benefits from good transport links;
- it is less than a mile from the M4 motorway;
- it is already in existence; and,
- the respondent claims that locals are used to aircraft movements.

**5. Opposes development at Bristol; promotes development at Exeter or Cardiff**

One response opposed an airport development in Bristol (claiming it is a poor location) but supports the development at Exeter or Cardiff due to existing road/rail links.

**6. Supports the linking of the HS2 scheme with a hub airport in the Midlands**

One response promoted the linking of HS2 with a hub airport in the Midlands, thus joining the country's aviation infrastructure closer together. The response also supported the preservation of Heathrow in order to avoid expanding urban areas in places such as Essex.

**7. General support for non-specified additional runway in the South East**

(Received from respondent based in Northern Ireland.) One response supported an additional runway in the South East in order to benefit Northern Ireland's economy.

**8. Opposes any additional airports**

One very short response opposed any additional airport development.

**9. Questions whether the Airports Commission is applying sufficient consideration to noise**

One response questioned whether noise is being considered enough in the Airport Commission's emerging thinking process.