

Airports Commission: Connectivity

Response from HACAN

HACAN is the long-established organisation which represents residents under the Heathrow flight paths.

We have submitted the report on connectivity we commissioned from CE Delft as the main part of our response.

In general, we feel that the Commission in its consultation document laid out the arguments in an even-handed way. The area where this might not apply is section 3.40 on the tourism deficit. We are not convinced that outbound tourism contributes £27 million a year. Below we have reproduced, with their permission, the comment from GACC (Gatwick Area Conservation Group) on this matter.

John Stewart

3.40 Tourism

We are glad to note that the Discussion Paper recognises that in 2011 there was a tourist deficit, mainly due to air travel, of £14 billion. Holidays in the sun may be pleasant, and can be counted as part of the output of the aviation industry (and thus included in the £9.8 billion). It cannot, however, be claimed that this haemorrhage of money and jobs has the additional effect of strengthening the UK economy.

The Discussion Document might usefully have invited submissions on whether increasing airport capacity would increase the tourist deficit and thus weaken the UK economy.

Instead the Document attempts to downplay the tourist deficit by suggesting that: ... *outbound tourism may have positive economic impacts on the UK economy to the extent to which it supports UK-based jobs in the travel and airline industries, and boosts high street consumer demand before trips are made – the latter has been valued at around £27 billion per year.*

We are surprised that the Commission is prepared to regurgitate without critical scrutiny this argument advanced on behalf of the aviation industry by ABTA.

In fact when the ONS statistics are examined it is apparent that most of the £27 billion is spent on travel agents and air fares. (The phrase '*the latter*' in the quotation above is misleading.) Only a comparatively small proportion goes on buying sun-cream and sun-glasses. A moment's thought makes one realise that money spent at travel agents goes mainly on booking foreign hotel rooms, and thus adds to the tourist deficit.

This section of the Discussion Document is listing the additional ways in which aviation benefits the economy, over and above its basic economic output. It is therefore worth asking how expenditure on air fares can be counted as an additional benefit, when air fares are already included in the ONS statistics for the economic output of the industry. Another case of double counting.