

SUBMISSION TO AVIATION COMMISSION
COMMENTS ON EMERGING THINKING
BY EXETER CITY COUNCIL (Submission no. 3)

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This response has been prepared with the approval of the Council's Portfolio Holders for (a) City Development and (b) Economy and Culture.

Our response

It has been very helpful to have an insight into the Commission's thinking at this stage.

While we note the preliminary conclusion that diverting traffic to regional airports will not remove the need for more capacity in the south east, we would urge the Commission not to underestimate the role of regional airports in providing a comprehensive national transport system. An effective hub airport must not be a substitute for a successful network of regional airports; the two should complement each other.

In the shorter term, mechanisms such as differential APD should not be ruled out as a means of mitigating congestion until more capacity can be provided.

While London and the south east may be the largest market for air travel, the significant investment that will be needed to provide additional capacity must produce an airport (or airports) that is a truly national resource, not just an airport to serve the south east. Heathrow is closer to most of the country in miles and travel time than a new airport east of London could possibly be. Cities like Exeter are probably too close to London to support a regular domestic air link, and we remain unconvinced that land transport connections to a location east of London could be upgraded sufficiently to compensate for the increased distance. Construction of such connections would add significantly to the already huge cost of a new airport, with a consequent risk that they would be watered down or omitted from the final plans in order to save money.

The prospect of a replacement hub airport to the east of London therefore remains a serious concern to us, as it no doubt does to cities elsewhere in the UK.

Exeter City Council
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