

Airports Commission Discussion Paper 03

AVIATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE

SUBMISSION BY THE RICHMOND HEATHROW CAMPAIGN

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This submission is the response from the Richmond Heathrow Campaign (RHC) to the Airports Commission's *Discussion Document 03: Aviation and Climate Change*. We do not consider that the contents are confidential and we have no objections to its publication.

We have no expertise on climate change per se, so we are not in a position to respond to the specific questions set out in the Discussion Document. The sole purpose of this submission is to ask the Airports Commission to consider what the future impact of aviation would be on climate change if, instead of the projected increase in the number of aircraft movements in order to carry the projected increase in the number of passengers, there were to be a proportionate increase in the number of passengers carried per aircraft movement (i.e. more passengers per movement than at present, by increasing the seating capacity across the air fleet), with a relatively small increase in the total number of movements compared with today.

Intuitively, we believe that fewer aircraft movements than are projected should mean less fuel consumption overall (even if the individual movements consume more fuel on account of the increased passenger loads) which should feed through into fewer CO₂ and other emissions. We have not been able to test this intuition in time to meet the deadline for responses to the Discussion Document, but we hope to include some supporting data as part of the proposals for providing additional passenger capacity in the longer term that we intend to submit to the Airports Commission in July.

We would stress that a move towards more passengers per aircraft movement should be seen as a viable alternative to increased movements as an end in itself. Any reduction in aircraft emissions would be an additional benefit and would not be the primary reason for encouraging a policy of more passengers per movement rather than the seemingly preferred alternative policy of more movements with relatively little increase in the passenger load.

We do regard climate change as an important issue and note with concern the increasing levels of aviation CO₂ in the long term forecasts on passenger demand recently published by the DfT (33.3 MtCO₂ in 2010 rising to 47 MtCO₂ in 2050), particularly in the context of the legal requirement to reduce UK greenhouse gases (including CO₂) by 80% by 2050 (160 MtCO₂) compared to the 1990 level (800 MtCO₂). Policy on controlling CO₂ and particularly aviation CO₂ is controversial especially at an international level. But we suggest early implementation of market and/or government controls is needed if the cost of serious consequences from the irreversible cumulative impact on future generations is to be avoided. There is uncertainty in the forecasts of both the CO₂ levels and the resultant impact on climate change and its consequences. We believe that any reduction in the production of CO₂ that can be accomplished by increasing passengers per movement could be implemented relatively quickly at relatively low cost and with flexibility to deal with the uncertainty of long term passenger demand. Policy along these lines should be less controversial than other options for containment of CO₂.

A brief trawl of the literature suggests there is a need for research into the impact of increasing fleet passenger loads on fuel burn and hence CO₂. While there is much knowledge of fuel burn of individual aircraft and airline fleets and their operation, the policy of encouraging higher fleet passenger loads per movement at airport, UK and international levels seems to be under-researched. We also believe the impact of growing passenger demand on surface transport and its CO₂ pollution should be given greater attention and relevance in the aviation debate.

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