Unite response to the Airports Commission Discussion Paper 06: Utilisation of the UK's Existing Airport Capacity

1 Summary

1.1 This response is submitted by Unite the Union, the UK's largest trade union with 1.4 million members across the private and public sectors. The union's members work in a range of industries including manufacturing, financial services, print, media, construction, transport and local government, education, health and not for profit sectors. The union's current membership includes 68,000 members working within Civil Aviation industry from all grades and in all workplace competencies. This body of members makes Unite the Union, the largest organisation in the civil aviation industry.

1.2 Unite believes that the beauty of any regional airport is that it can provide a connecting flight from a location close to home, to any global destination with a commercial airport and businesses with the ability to have access to the global marketplace. Whilst acknowledging that direct point to point passenger services create a better service and attract more business links, daily services are often financially unsustainable, as there is not enough interest amongst the traveling public to fly on that route. Due to capacity restraints at London airports and the consequential increase in landing costs, it is only those regional connections that carry the most passengers that survive.

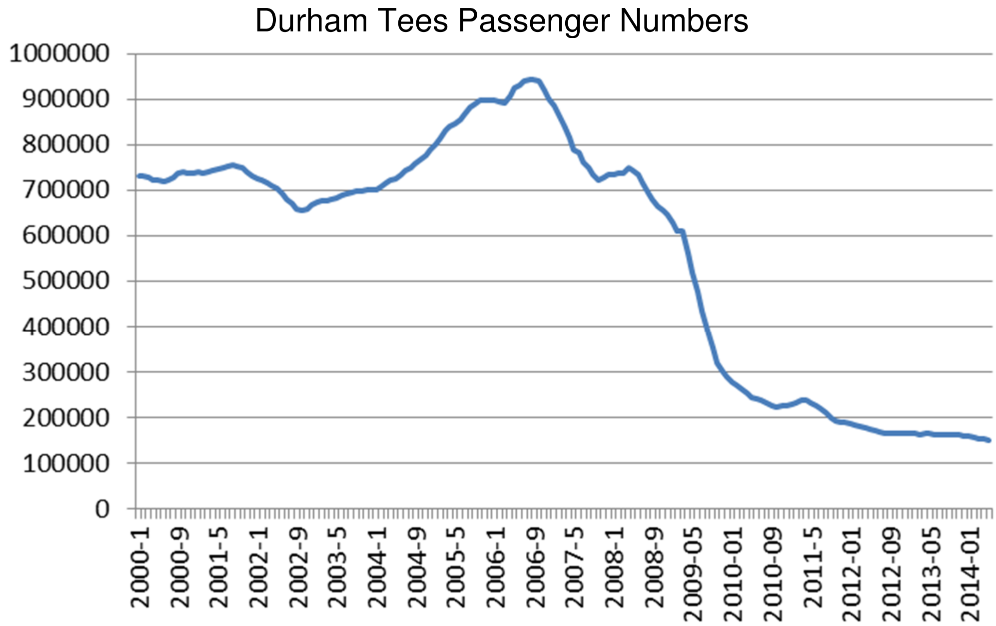
2 Commission Questions

Questions on the role that non-London airports currently play in providing connectivity and utility to the UK.

Is the Commission correct to identify a reduction in air connectivity between the UK regions and the London airport network over the last decade?

2.1 Unite believes business will invest in areas with good and frequent connectivity. Flight services to regional airports can only be provided if there is a critical volume of passengers to make the economic argument work. If not, services will be withdrawn and business will take their investment elsewhere. Consequently it is a constant battle among airlines to discover new direct routes opportunities, see if the routes existence will stimulate investment to bring in more passengers and if the airline is losing money on that route move their planes to routes that are working. In that way, it is a self for filling prophecy that investment becomes centred around hub airports or areas with existing significant populations of business customers. Unite therefore believes without the link to the capital the area is isolated resulting in the decline in demand for flights to or from that area.

2.2 This can most clearly be illustrated by the decline in passengers utilising Durham Tees Airport (as seen in the below graph). As Heathrow capacity became ever more critical the decision was made to either continue the service linking Durham to Heathrow or withdraw it in favour of more profitable routes to far flung destinations. The latter option prevailed and now Durham is a shadow of its former self, struggling to remain operational.



Source: CAA Airport statistics Table 1 Size of UK airports

2.3 Unite firmly believes that due to the lack of historic investment in runway capacity, at the hub in particular, and the increasing pressure on the bottom line, there has had to be some very hard decisions made over the continuation of services. Consequently Unite would agree that the Commission is correct in identifying a decline but only due to capacity restraints and financial constraints.

How do recent new routes to the capital, and the stabilisation in passenger numbers on domestic routes to and from London since 2010, affect this analysis?

2.4 As highlighted in the paper, the reestablishment of Heathrow's services to Leeds was as a result of British airways takeover of BMI. In this takeover, the group had a sudden influx of spaces at Heathrow and only short to medium range aircraft to provide services. As the airline had no way to secure enough longer range aircraft, it decided to look at the potential of re-establishing short haul routes. Given the growth of the legal profession and other businesses creating high value customers, it was a natural choice to reconnect Leeds with Heathrow. A similar case could not now be made for Durham which is why no flights are being made on that route.

2.5 The growth of Southend has again been on economic grounds as the airports owners have offered the airlines a deal they could not refuse in terms of landing fee costs and improved rail connectivity to London. The price was so good that easyJet withdrew services from Stansted in order to establish routes from the airport.

2.6 London City Airport was built to service the centre of a business community that had been displaced to Canary Wharf with the offer of cheaper office space. As a result, rather than the airport developing a market for its customers, it was the high value customers that caused the airport to be built. London City can provide swift links to other European financial capitals and rival European hubs which do not suffer the delays that can occur at Heathrow. With this market crying out for a link to New York, BA developed a novel solution in utilising an aircraft normally limited to medium haul routes, adding extra fuel tanks and removing seats so that the aircraft had both the short take off capacity and the range to fly from New York to City Airport in one go. The potential of London City, is therefore, only limited by its runway and terminal capacity on what is a very small site with a runway of restrictive length.

How do respondents view these trends developing in the future?

2.7 Whilst it was true to highlight that up until recently the number of domestic passengers was on the decline. Today however the UK is seeing the seeds of a recovering domestic market. The previous decline in passengers commenced prior to the economic collapse, caused by the removal of routes as airlines were to utilise the limited hub capacity.

	Domestic	International	Total
Oct-12	-0.2%	0.3%	0.2%
Nov-12	3.0%	4.3%	4.0%
Dec-12	1.2%	1.6%	1.5%
Jan-13	-2.8%	-0.1%	-0.6%
Feb-13	-1.3%	-0.2%	-0.5%
Mar-13	-1.0%	3.6%	2.7%
Apr-13	-2.8%	0.6%	0.0%
May-13	0.8%	7.6%	6.3%
Jun-13	3.0%	4.1%	3.9%
Jul-13	6.8%	4.4%	4.8%
Aug-13	6.1%	5.5%	5.6%
Sep-13	3.5%	3.6%	3.6%
Oct-13	4.4%	4.9%	4.8%
Nov-13	1.0%	3.5%	3.0%
Dec-13	2.4%	5.2%	4.6%
Jan-14	6.3%	5.7%	5.8%
Feb-14	2.3%	4.5%	4.0%
Mar-14	3.0%	-0.4%	0.3%
Apr-14	5.8%	9.1%	8.5%
May-14	2.2%	4.6%	4.2%

Source CAA Airport statistics table 10.1 and 10.2

2.8 Unite therefore believes that once passengers start emerging from the financial crisis they will begin to start flying again. By and large this has been the experience of the majority of regional airports in recent months

Is the Commission's analysis of the multiple factors influencing domestic air connectivity between London and the UK regions accurate?

2.9 Unite believes the commissions analysis is correct in part. Due to the pricing disparity between the cost of aviation and the pricing of rail travel, Unite has yet to be convinced that the development of domestic rail connectivity has made any difference.

Of the factors outlined, which are the most significant or important for explaining how the market has developed?

2.10 As highlighted earlier, Unite believe that the most important factor is that of capacity at the hub followed by the availability of onward connections. Whilst these links may only provide for a relatively small percentage of passengers on routes to other London airports, it is these routes that carry the frequent business flyers. Once these are gone the regional airport has to rely on a high demand for flights to the destinations served to keep airports open.

What additional factors, if any, should the Commission be mindful of?

2.11 The development of Public Service Obligations (PSO's) to larger airports other than those serving remote communities is a welcome move as it may provide the critical timescale for the development of a stronger regional economy, that may latterly be able to support itself.

Is overall transport connectivity between London and the regions at an appropriate level?

2.12 Since the privatisation of the aviation industry in the UK and the advent of competition between airports for customers, It has been Government policy to let the market decide. The result of this policy has been a concentration of wealth toward the South East of England. If there is to be a redistribution of wealth to the regions, there needs to be connectivity to bring freight and passengers into and away from these areas.

2.13 Before aviation, wealth and investment centred around the railways, as it was the fastest way to get goods and people from A to B. Today the fastest way is by air. If the regions are to compete with London in the provision of commercial investment from outside and within the UK, it needs to show they can provide a similar connection speed. Unite therefore believe that without the development of better connectivity, the regions will struggle.

2.14 In general turbo-prop aircraft are on average 30% less polluting than jet powered flight. Whilst not as fast as a jet aircraft the time difference in travel time on a short haul domestic flight is negligible. High Speed Rail connections have already proved in other countries to be another alternative if competitively priced. Environmentally, Unite believes, there is little to choose between them in terms of carbon per seat km, although the relative position of one against the other is determined by a range of factors including:- the speed of the train, the power source fuel mix used to generate the electricity and the noise considerations.

What are the social or economic consequences of changes to air connectivity?

2.15 Airports, by their very nature, are an economic asset to the community they serve. They offer employment to area's residents and enhance business opportunities for entities engaged in aviation-oriented activities, such as maintenance and repair of aircraft, fuel sales, flight training, and air charter services. A local airport serves as a portal for access to the European air transportation system, providing support for personal and business travel, both to local residents and visitors. Airport businesses can also serve the community by providing a convenient location to receive and send shipments of goods. Airports serve as gateways for economic activity, providing a stimulus for business enterprises and generating employment opportunities for area residents.

2.16 York Aviation drafted a report into the viability of reopening Plymouth airport on behalf of businesses in the Plymouth area, which identified that the most important benefit would be to the wider regeneration of Plymouth's economy. They quantified this directly in terms of journey time savings of £3 million per year at that time, rising to £30 million per year in 2030.

2.17 After reviewing a number of economic studies into the subject of economic benefits Unite believe that for every £60 an airport generates in direct impact, it will create around £40 indirect impact, and due to the induced economic benefits, it will create around £200 in total economic stimulus to the local economy.

2.18 A report published by the Airport Operators Association (AOA), in June 2014, highlights the vital contribution airports make to their local communities. Entitled 'Airports in the

Community'[1], the report highlights the huge economic contribution made to the UK economy by regional aviation. Regional airports also provide many social benefits locally.

2.19 When routes are lost at a regional airport, especially ones to London, it can start a rout, seeing other airlines following suit and leading to the death knell for that facility. Since 2000, eight airports that report to the CAA ended their commercial operations and several more have suffered sudden downturns in passenger footfall, not only as a result of losing a connection but, also on other routes that arrive and depart from that airport.

2.20 The most recent of these is Manston airport in Kent who had, in the last year, seen a considerable resurgence in passenger numbers. Its closure leaves the residents in Kent with the option of traveling into London to catch flights or crossing the channel by high-speed rail and flying from Lyon Saint Exupéry, Brussels airports or Charles De Gaule.

Can respondents provide any comparisons or other evidence to support their response?

2.21 Since 1990 some 12 UK airports have lost air service connections to Heathrow, namely Birmingham, Durham Tees Valley, East Midlands, Guernsey, Humberside, Inverness, Isle of Man, Jersey, Liverpool, Newquay, Plymouth and now Belfast International. For those cities that have retained their direct air service connections, the frequency has fallen and there is less competition in the market on routes especially on journeys between Aberdeen, Belfast, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds Bradford, Manchester and Newcastle and Heathrow.

2.22 The loss of connectivity results in individuals, who use routes for commuting or to maintain remote business premises, often being left with the stark choice of changing jobs, closing offices or relocation. The alternatives are often prohibitively expensive and too time consuming, especially on routes that require a sea journey. This loss of connectivity in turn drives down the regional economy that supplied that office or affluent family that has had to relocate. All too often families cannot afford to move and become just another statistic.

2.23 There are many economic studies that have been conducted over the years that highlight the benefits of regional airports and connectivity but Unite has not conducted its own study at this stage to provide any further evidence.

What future trends do respondents envisage in domestic air connectivity excluding routes into London?

2.24 Since Manchester has opened its second runway, it has obtained more and more interest from airlines in developing routes. As a result a greater number of passengers are flying into Manchester as opposed to London, in order to connect to longer haul routes. Whilst this is not on the scale of the Gatwick or Heathrow currently, it does show that the airport has the potential to become a regional hub. The future connection to London by HS2 will have the potential to release some capacity on the Manchester to London routes. Unite is confident that more would be released if there was a connection between HS1 and HS2 without a fifteen minute walk down the Euston Road.

2.25 Birmingham has 11 regional connecting flight services, just 4 of these saw an increase in passengers but this may change given the recent recovery seen elsewhere in the domestic market. Over 75% of Birmingham's domestic passengers are on flights to or from a Scottish airport and a further 30% arrive or depart to Northern Ireland. The airports future

[1] http://www.aoa.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/AOA-AIRPORTS-IN-THE-COMMUNITY.pdf

connectivity to HS2 will enhance its catchment area and secure its place as a hub for the midlands.

2.26 The dominance of these two airports will adversely affect airports in the area as they each bid for more connections. The movement of flights from Liverpool to Manchester and the consequential decline of Liverpool Airport may well be the start of a trade war for dominance. Liverpool is always assured of connecting domestic flights from the Isle of Man for those who wish to avoid the ferry which makes up the largest volume of passengers flying domestically to and from the airport.

2.27 Both Edinburgh and Glasgow also have the potential to become regional hubs, but given that Edinburgh is the Scottish capital, it has the greater tourism draw than its rival. With its enhanced surface transport connections, Edinburgh also has the added advantage of enjoying a transit system devoid of road traffic congestion. Consequently if Glasgow does not invest in a rail connection or better surface access, it will suffer.

2.28 Aberdeen and Norwich will always be the main air transit points for the oil industry and the remote communities such as those on the Shetland Isles. As a consequence Unite feels that both airports will continue to provide this service whilst there are oil and gas fields operating in the North Sea, and Atlantic.

2.29 Belfast International's loss of its connection to Heathrow, will not affect its passenger numbers too aversely as its main flow of passengers is on the route to Liverpool John Lennon, followed by connections to Gatwick, Stansted, Glasgow then Luton. Its main problem is the competition for international and domestic flights is from Dublin, due to the decision by the Republic of Ireland to remove any passenger aviation tax and subsidise flights from Dublin, Shannon and Cork. Passengers using both of Belfast's airports, in contrast, still have to pay Air Passenger Duty (APD) on both legs of their journey on domestic routes.

2.30 Analysis of the routes flown from Heathrow highlights that the route to Leeds is only temporary unless it can outperform the numbers flying from Newcastle. If there is no expansion at Heathrow or support for a continuation of a domestic connection to Heathrow, both routes are at risk when British Airways obtains larger aircraft. The economic blow to the region, if the Newcastle to Heathrow route was also lost would be far greater than that the loss of the Durham Tees route given the proximity of the two airports. When Durham's Heathrow connection was lost, passengers simply drove a little further to Newcastle.

2.31 Durham has devoted itself to becoming the main gateway to the area from Amsterdam since losing the connection to Heathrow, moving from 14.1% of total passengers in 2005 to 62.2% traveling on the Amsterdam route last year. This increase in percentage is sadly not reflected in a growth of passengers using the route. Airlines have tried in vain to establish all manner of routes to fill the capacity at Durham. The long term future of Durham is therefore doubtful unless it can establish some plan to attract a large volume of passengers.

2.32 Over 10% of Newcastle's passengers fly to Heathrow with 6.2% going via Amsterdam, 4.3% using Dublin and 4.2% flying to Paris Charles De Gaul. Consequently the market for connecting flights is split between these four airports, resulting in competition for business between the airlines. At the moment, Dublin's share of this market is expanding rapidly.

2.33 Southampton is growing its connectivity rapidly. Its location to the south of London is ideally placed to capture the high net worth Surrey commuter belt customers who wish to avoid the hassles associated with travelling via a London airport. Southampton's 10 core regional services include direct and frequent services to Manchester, Leeds, Newcastle, the Channel Islands, Scotland and Northern Island, allowing passengers to cover the majority of the country easily. This is probably why passenger numbers have climbed on 8 of these routes in 2013.

2.34 The security of Newquey and Dundee airports has been bolstered by their eligibility for a Public Service Obligation (PSO), hopefully guaranteeing the owners a future. The reliance on other larger airports such as Exeter and Edinburgh / Aberdeen to service these remote communities would be unacceptable as it would have cut off the region from the wider world.

How relevant are the factors explored in relation to London and the regions for these other domestic routes?

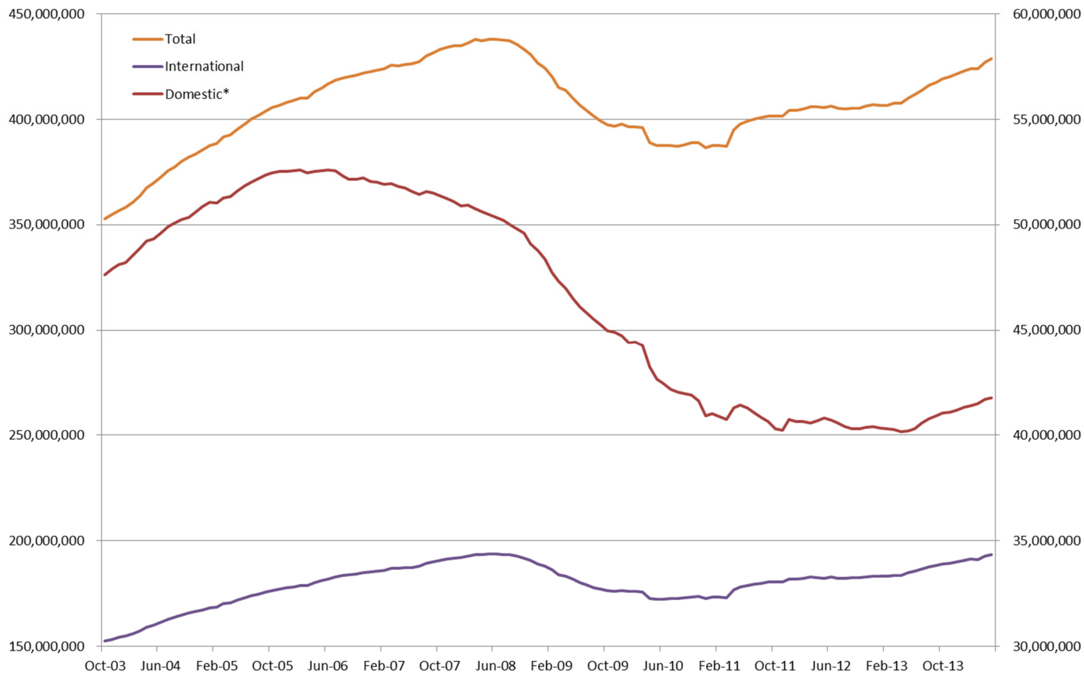
2.35 Rail connectivity is obviously a factor which affects the number of passengers traveling to a region, but when you have competition from a low cost carrier under cutting the price of travel by significant margins, such rail connections become an irrelevance.

2.36 Without knowing the predicted pricing structure of HS2, and the resulting pricing on the current West Coast line, it would be impossible to gauge the effect it will have on domestic aviation. Initially there will always be those who take HS2 for the experience instead of flying but this novelty factor will be short lived. If the line was connected directly to HS1 and services ran through to continental Europe.

Is the Commission correct in its analysis of changing purposes of travel and routes types at non- London airports?

What are the drivers and ramifications of this trend?

2.37 Unite believes that the commissions analysis is correct in highlighting the reduction of services but would suggest that this decline in domestic passenger numbers began prior to the financial crisis, driven by the lack of capacity at Heathrow and the passenger realisation that to arrive at their chosen airport may require two changes of aircraft or more, instead of one. The below graph clearly indicates that domestic passenger number decline began in 2005.



Rolling 12 month total passenger numbers traveling through UK airports. Source: CAA statistics,*use the right hand scale

2.38 The loss of connectivity from Belfast International to Heathrow has benefited both Dublin and Belfast City considerably. Unite fears that this consolidation of connections to a single airport and the domestic passenger aviation taxation hurdle may lead to Belfast International Airport's closure.

2.39 Unite believes the drivers of this trend of smaller airport closures are lack of investment, regional competition and surface access options, or rather the lack of them. Southend airport is an example of a small regional airport, which through sharp business practices has attracted a major low cost carrier to its door. This resulted in routes diverted from their current rival London base to the Essex airport. Such a radical change in the charges levied on the airlines was only possible as a result of Stobart's utilisation of directly employed ground support staff on inferior terms and conditions compared to the market norm for those roles. The Southend model also relies on non-existent landing fees, coupled with enhanced charges for everything else.

2.40 Whilst an increase in competition between airports, may be good news for the airlines and passengers, such competition often results in a reduction in the quality of the service provided. At Stansted Airport, due to the dominance of Ryanair, there are fewer companies, able to provide ground support services. Consequently it is not unusual for passengers, on rival airlines, to be left waiting for their bags for an hour. The dominance of Ryanair means that there too few flights to sustain rival several ground handling companies, leading to their departure or merger into something more financially viable. Unite has witnessed this contraction in the number of ground service companies resulting airlines choice disappearing

Questions on how the business models of these airports are changing, and how they can be expected to change further in time.

Is the Commission right to identify particular financial challenges for smaller airports?

2.41 Unite believes that there are economies of scale to be found at larger airports that disproportionately affect the financial viability of airports. For smaller airports the ability to attract and maintain airline services is the key that can make or break an airport.

2.42 The commission is correct in identifying the need to provide fire crew on standby and maintenance staff but these are costs that are unavoidable. Unite would, however, stress that it is in these roles at regional airports where you will find the most loyal and hardworking staff dedicated to serving the community in which the airport resides.

2.43 Unite is concerned to discover that some roles at airports are being filled by agency and zero hours contract staff, who may be totally unfamiliar with layout and safe working practices. Unite feels that whilst you should not compromise on the foundations of a building to keep it standing, likewise, you should not compromise on the quality and security of staff and passengers utilising an airport. Consequently, whist safety provisions and staff costs are a cost to any airport; Unite believes these costs should not be viewed as a financial challenge.

Can respondents corroborate or refute any of the Commission's evidence on financial pressures at regional airports?

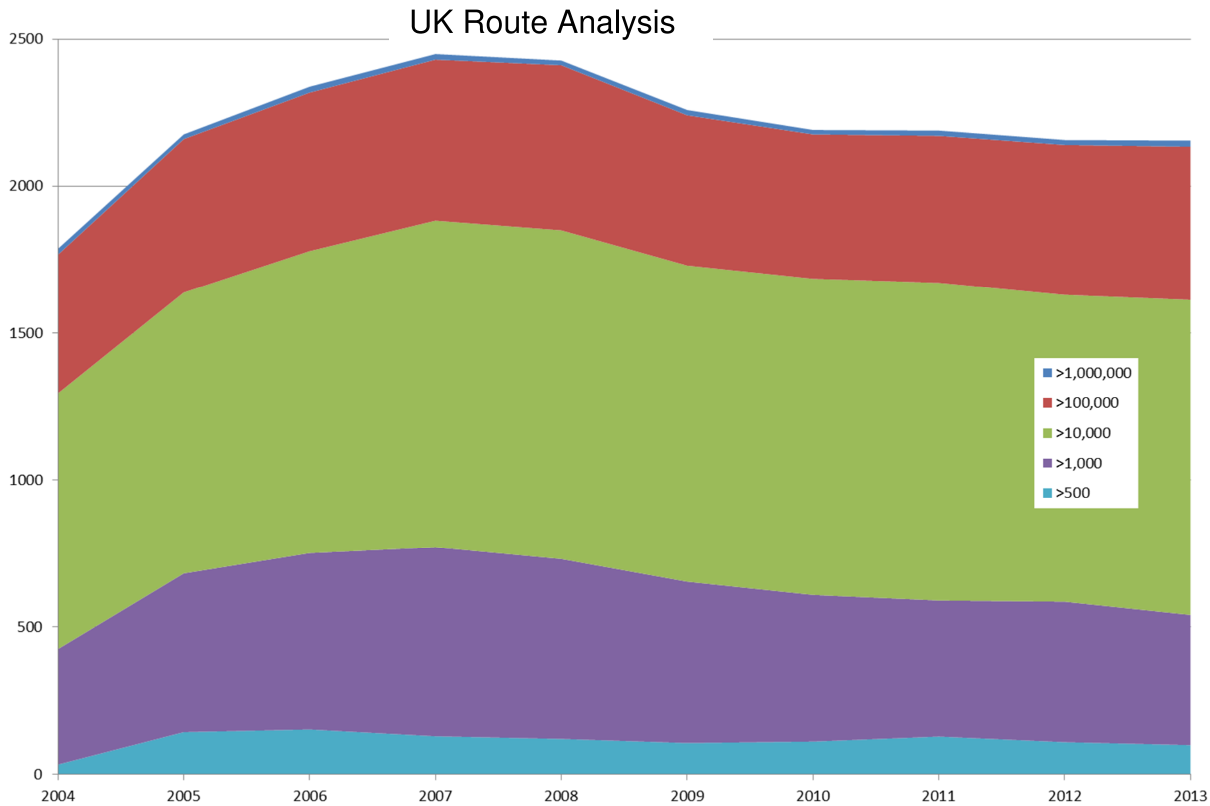
2.44 Unite cannot refute the commissions evidence on the financial pressures at regional airports. Unite believes that many services that are required are simply unavoidable.

Is the Commission accurate in its analysis of the market dynamics affecting the non-London airports sector?

2.45 Unite is not in a position to dispute the accuracy of the commissions analysis of the market dynamics beyond its comments elsewhere in this response.

Is the Commission correct to identify a broad trend, especially since 2007, in larger regional airports retaining or building their route networks, whilst smaller regional airports' route networks shrink?

2.46 Unite believes that the commission is correct to highlight the contraction of services but would disagree that contraction of services was limited to smaller airports. The below table highlights that the number of routes with more than 10,000 passengers per annum has declined since 2008. It is only in the past few months, as the global economic climate improves, that we have seen any increase in this number.



Source: CAA airport statistics tables 12.1 and 12.2 - Number of services carrying greater than X passengers per annum

What explanations can respondents provide for this trend?

2.47 Unite would suggest that the trend of contracting services in UK aviation has been a reflection of the pressures felt by the industry on the bottom line. Airlines have been finding it ever harder to make a profit, not just in the UK, but globally. Every one of the major United States airlines has at some point in the recent past gone into chapter 11 bankruptcy.

2.48 As budgets have tightened, the providers of low cost aviation have become more dominant and able to dictate terms to airports. The level of competition in services like ground handling, has become unsustainable resulting in the merger of major handling companies. A similar picture has been felt throughout the industry leading to the growing number of alliances, partnerships, mergers and share swopping arrangements between airlines.

Can respondents provide any evidence to counter or support the Commission's analysis of the UK population having quick access to relatively high numbers of airports, or to build on the Commission's comparison between the UK and other countries' airport networks?

2.49 Unite agrees with the Commissions analysis of UK population density and access to airports but, would liken the implied suggestion that the country may be served better with fewer smaller airports, with the conclusions of the infamous "The Reshaping of British Railways" report by Dr Beeching. Whilst it may be true that in a competitive market between rival airport owners, there may well be a survival of the fittest conclusion, Unite would hope that the government of the day will recognise that remote communities, like those found in Scotland and the South West, may need government intervention to prevent the closure of a vital economic link to the capital and other large cities within the UK and Europe.

What analysis ought the national or local Government undertake when faced with a potential airport closure?

2.50 Unite would hope that the national and local Government would look at:-

- the size of the local population;
- the distance a resident would need to travel by public transport in order to access a connection to London, or a number of other major UK cities;
- the alternate forms of public transport available especially with respect to the time needed to reach an alternative airport;
- the businesses in the area and their reliance on air connectivity;
- the number of jobs that would be lost at the airport and within the service that supply the airport with its services;
- The home location of these employees, to discover how it will affect the local economy;
- the impact on the roads in the area if the airport was lost and the consequential increase in road traffic between the region and the nearest airport or large town or city;
- the viability of public services to that area now that the major source of passenger will no longer be operational;
- if the loss of the airport also makes a public transport link less than financially viable, what would be the effect on the passengers who use that service;
- what alternative employment opportunities are available to the workforce who rely on the airport or public transport links that serve the airport, in the areas where they live;

2.51 Unite does not believe this list is exhaustive, but it should serve as a guide.

In the longer term, what is an appropriate, adequate or ideal shape for the UK's airport system?

2.52 Unite believes that residents of the UK should have easy access to an airport, with connecting links, enabling them to take an active part in the worlds society. Unite feels that the commercialisation of public transport services, including aviation, leads to a contracting economy, where those nearest the economic centres, are provided with access to the wealth, provided by trade with the global economic powerhouses. Unite therefore believes in a truly multimodal transport network where each airport becomes a transport interchange between road, rail and air.

2.53 Small isolated communities should receive a publically subsidised air link so that they can benefit from the ability to order items and receive them within the next few days. Local medium sized, mini hub airports, should provide a limited number of financially self-sustaining direct services. Critically, there should be direct and frequent connections to the main UK hub and to rival European hubs to enable connectivity to the world economy and for that economy to access these regions. Such an airport structure should be interconnected by air and/or by high-speed rail

Is consolidation of the airport network desirable, inevitable, both or neither?

2.54 Unite believes that left to its own devices, if the global economy had continued to falter, then the consolidation of the airport network would have been inevitable, without government intervention. This would have led to a further overheating of the South East economy to the detriment of the rest of the country.

2.55 Given that global aviation is emerging from the recession as the populous becomes more affluent, such a consolidation may be slowed or possibly reversed, if there is a lack of capacity to expand. Recent figures on passenger growth will inevitably lead to greater connectivity demand. This demand will obviously grow faster if there is a rebalancing of pay between those at the top and the workforce.

Questions on how the connectivity provided by these airports can be enhanced, and on the options to intervene in this sector.

Has the Commission correctly identified the major options to support or bolster the regional airports sector?

2.56 Unite believes the commission has correctly identified the major options for support and bolstering the regional airports sector with the exception of the removal of APD entirely and the local authority taking over ownership and management of the airport.

Of the options here explored, which have the potential to be most beneficial?

2.57 Unite believes that the provision of just one of these options would be enough to secure the continued operation of an airport. Of the options discussed, the provision of a public service obligation (PSO) would be the only way to guarantee the continued operation of flights, but this would not guarantee of itself that this will generate enough income to fund the operation and development of the airport.

Can respondents suggest means of bringing about positive change in the context of these options?

2.58 Unite is not in a position to comment on this area

What recommendations could the Commission make in these areas?

2.59 Unite is not in a position to comment on this area

Questions on the constraints to developing further utility and connectivity at airports serving London and the South East, as well as how and by whom these constraints can be mitigated

Geographical Constraints

Are there longer-term or more extensive surface transport improvements and developments (beyond those committed to in the National Infrastructure Plan) that could support the other London airports to make best use of their capacity?

2.60 Unite believes that Heathrow airport should be connected to the high speed rail network as soon as possible. Unite believes that by diverting the path of the planned HS2 line this could be achieved and in the process could move the line sufficiently west to avoid the need to travel such a distance on the surface through the Chilterns. Unite supports the Heathrow hub proposals in this area in relation to the redesign of the path of HS2.

2.61 Unite also agrees with the commission's proposals contained in the Interim report that their needs to be a southerly rail connection from Heathrow, allowing better connectivity to Gatwick, without the need to traverse the central London transport network. Unite also agrees that there is a need to enhance the rail connectivity to Stansted.

2.62 Unite feels that a number of airports need improved surface connectivity options. The need for a shuttle bus to take passengers from the train station deters passengers from utilising airports and encourages more travel by car. Connectivity to Stansted Airport from the East requires shuttle bus services or a round trip via either London Liverpool Street or Ely. Ipswich to Stansted by car halves the time it would take by train and from Chelmsford the car journey takes a third of the rail journey time. Extending the line from Stansted east to Braintree or South East to Chelmsford would significantly reduce these travel times and provide a swifter connection between Essex and Suffolk.

2.63 If you want to traverse the distance from Bristol airport to Cardiff airport, its twice as long by public transport. In particular, Unite believes that the proposals to provide rail connectivity to Galsgow airport needs to be revived as soon as possible.

2.64 The consultation paper draws attention to the accessibility of access to a major airport, but if a prospective passenger wishes to avoid taking the car to the airport and instead travel by rail, their options become very limited and take up a considerable amount of time.

Are there any ways that government, or any other stakeholders, could improve airport site access? Are there any innovative ways that airports could resolve site access problems?

2.65 Every 15 minutes a commercially operated high-speed magnetic levitation train (MAGLEV) train departs from Shanghai Pudong International Airport and travels to the outskirts of central Pudong where passengers can interchange to the Shanghai Metro. Even the novelty value of a service that can accelerate to 350 kmh in just 2 minutes and complete the 30 km journey in just over 7 minutes. Such a system has been previously proposed to connect Glasgow and Edinburgh and other schemes in the midlands in 2006[2]. Whilst a Maglev system was trailed at Birmingham airport previously, technology has moved on and the system is now far more reliable.

2.66 Stansted is 33 km from central London and it currently takes 45 minutes by train to the airport. Luton airport is just 21 km from central London yet can take over and 50 minutes by train and shuttle bus. London Southend is 55 km from central London yet passengers can get from Liverpool Street to the airport in 53 minutes.

[2] http://www.500kmh.com/UKU_Factbook2.pdf

2.67 If there are plans to develop RAF Northolt into a commercial airport it will require a significant upgrade in its surface connectivity. At the moment, by public transport from central London, it requires a 35 minute underground journey and a 15 minute walk!

Planning Constraints

Are there particular pros and cons to airport developments moving through the NSIP or Town and Country Planning process for a) developers or b) communities?

2.68 Whilst it is the businesses and communities of an area that hosts an airport who realise the greatest economic benefits, it is also these communities that are the most vocal about noise, congestion and pollution. Consequently any new development should be part of a NSIP. Proposals to develop Heathrow and add another runway have been ongoing for decades due to local opposition, yet housing developments on the airports perimeter have been waved through with very little argument. Such development of the land close to airports only serves to create an even larger body of opposition to expansion plans.

2.69 Unite believes that if such nationally important developments of transport infrastructure are left to communities to develop, nothing would be built and the future standing of the nation on the world stage would be placed at risk. Already, given the delays to the expansion of Heathrow and lack of high speed connectivity, the UK to become a laughing stock with rival hubs reaping all the economic benefits.

2.70 One look at how long it took to approve Heathrow Terminal 5[3] (T5) and the congestion caused in the remaining terminals that resulted during construction, highlights the problems with the UK planning process. Unite therefore feels that the actions of a few should not stand in the way of something that benefits a nation.

Could either the NSIP or Town and Country planning process be improved, either the process itself or development of supporting policy, to support developers and meet the needs of local communities?

2.71 Unite believes that there is too much weight given to the right to appeal against decisions to build nationally important infrastructure. Provided that the government is fully aware of the objections and communities have been consulted and made fully aware of the proposals, then there should be just one chance to appeal and a strict deadline for this appeal to be heard. Such appeals should never be allowed to run and run over a number of months or even years as was the case with T5.

Is there a current case for lifting planning caps for any airports in London or the South East? If not now, when should these caps be reviewed?

2.72 Unite believes that the removal of current caps on capacity would not elevate the crisis that the UK has been left with as a result of political positioning to avoid making any firm commitment on additional capacity.

Commercial Constraints

Are there any actions stakeholders could take to support airports in mitigating their commercial constraints?

[3] http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200102/cmselect/cmproced/823/2070206.htm

2.73 Unite is always willing to support airports politically in their efforts to mitigate commercial constraints, if these actions are in the best interest of the nation and the workforce.

Are there any examples of best practice in this area?

2.74 Environmentally, Copenhagen Airport has introduced measures which reduce air pollution and reduce exposure to high levels of particulates experienced by workers on the apron. These measures include single engine taxiing, the use of ground electrical supplies instead of using on-board generators and the utilisation of electric vehicles. If combined with measure to promote a greater use of public transport and therefore reduce surface emissions to a minimum, it would bring areas like those around Heathrow back within European emission limits.

Airspace constraints

Are there any medium term airspace developments that could support making best use of capacity, beyond those set out in the Interim Report?

2.75 Unite is unaware of any additional measures that could be utilised to make better use of capacity over and above that already stated.

Are there any innovative long term airspace developments which could provide support beyond those set out in the Interim Report?

2.76 Unite is unaware of any measures for the development of airspace utilisation beyond those covered in the Interim Report.

Regulatory, Tax or Legal Constraints
Are there any new data available that the Commission should review in reference to its conclusions on regulatory tax or legal changes that could alter our assessment of their usefulness in making best use of capacity?

2.77 Unite is unaware of any tax or legal changes that could alter the commissions assessment of the best use of capacity.

Are there any areas of legal, tax or regulatory constraint, not considered by the Commission in its Interim Report, which merit further review?

2.78 Unite is unaware of any tax, legal or regulatory constraints that have not already been covered in the commissions assessment.

Impact of Commission final report

Are there any topics or areas of further study beyond those set out in the Appraisal framework, that would allow the Commission to understand the impact of development at Heathrow or Gatwick on the other London Airports?

2.79 Unite is unaware of any topics or areas of further study beyond those set out in the Appraisal framework.

3 Conclusion

3.1 Unite believes there is clearly a need for an International hub and a vibrant and sustainable regional airport network.

3.2 Unite believes that there are two distinctly different markets that are served by the civil air transport industry. The first provides access to global businesses requiring smooth and hassle free transfers to enable travel at the time they need it, to the destination, in which they wish to, or have already invested time and money. The second market is for the leisure customer who wishes to relax, unwind, visit friends and family or simply enjoy the scenery, shopping, culture and further leisure opportunities of a different area or country. Both provide the UK with considerable potential for the world to enjoy our business, leisure and tourism opportunities.

3.3 Unite feels that there will, in time, develop a North-East and Scottish mini-hub airport to provide the regions with some of the financial and connectivity benefits enjoyed by the South-East as a result of Heathrow.

3.4 Unite further believes in the need for a fully integrated transport network to maximise the utilisation of the most efficient and sustainable transport options. This network needs to ensure that people and freight arrive at their destinations in the most relaxed and hassle free manner possible. Unite therefore calls for the importance of enhanced surface connectivity to be stressed in the commission's final conclusions.

3.5 Whilst airports can make a considerable some from airport parking, the volume of traffic that is attracted to an airport is so extreme that it can create congestion on the surrounding road network. Unite believes there is a clear and present need to address this issue to ensure there is a realistic onward public transport strategy to provide for passenger needs.

3.6 Unite believes that without significant investment, there will be a decline in connectivity, leading to the isolation of the UK on the world stage, creating an economic spiral of decline. Recent figures suggest that the aviation sector is emerging from the global financial crisis but that should not be seen as an excuse to rest on laurels. Unite believes that the decision on these issues has been kicked into the long grass for far too long on grounds of political expediency. Unite therefore calls on the commission to stress the need to act and not dodge the issue for yet another political term.

[redacted]

[redacted]