



Department  
for Transport

# Engaging with Stakeholders: Statement of Approach by Ministers and Officials dealing with the revised draft Airports National Policy Statement

**Moving Britain Ahead**

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Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London SW1P 4DR  
Telephone 0300 330 3000  
Website [www.gov.uk/dft](http://www.gov.uk/dft)  
General enquiries: <https://forms.dft.gov.uk>



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# Foreword

The Government has accepted the case for airport expansion in the south-east of England and the Airports Commission's shortlist of options. It has announced its preference for Heathrow Airport Limited's Northwest runway scheme as a way of delivering this expansion, and carried out a public consultation on a [draft National Policy Statement \(Airports NPS\)](#) in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Planning Act 2008 for nationally significant infrastructure projects.

The Government launched the public consultation on 2 February 2017 on a draft Airports NPS. This initial consultation closed on 25 May, and a further consultation on the revised draft Airports NPS was launched on 24th October 2017. Following completion of the consultations and Parliamentary scrutiny, a draft Airports NPS is intended to be laid before Parliament. If the House of Commons approves a draft Airports NPS, or does not object to it, the Secretary of State may then designate it.

However, the fact that the Government has announced its preference and is taking forward further work, as set out above, in no way prejudices the outcome of further consideration and consultation, or development or designation of an Airports NPS in due course. The Government recognises the vital importance of keeping an open mind throughout the process, and also of ensuring that it is seen to have an open mind.

This document sets out the way in which Ministers and officials at the Department for Transport will engage with stakeholders, including the preferred scheme promoter during the consultation process and the consideration and development of a draft Airports NPS, alongside its other aviation and airports-related responsibilities, in a way which is fair, consistent and transparent. This approach will apply until such time as a draft Airports NPS is designated by the Secretary of State.

[Sir Jeremy Sullivan](#), the former Senior President of Tribunals, has been appointed to [oversee the consultation process](#) (and this will include the process of further consultation). This is an independent role, and he will be responsible for holding government to account to ensure best practice is upheld.

# Statement of Approach

The Planning Act 2008's regime for nationally significant infrastructure projects plays an important role in ensuring the UK gets the infrastructure it needs without creating unacceptable impacts. Ministers who are responsible for developing the policy, and recommending it to Parliament, must act, and be seen to act fairly and even-handedly by bringing an unbiased, properly directed and independent mind to the consideration of the policy in question.

With this in mind, the following statement outlines how Ministers and officials in the Department for Transport will engage with stakeholders, including the preferred scheme promoter, during this policy development period. The following arrangements apply during completion of the consultation process, the development and consideration of a draft NPS and until such time as an Airports NPS is designated by the Secretary of State.

## **During this time, Department for Transport Ministers will:**

- Not entertain privately made representations about the content of the draft Airports NPS, or the consultations, nor discuss the merits of the draft Airports NPS or the consultations with any interested party, including the preferred scheme promoter;
- Not take part in a decision related to the draft Airports NPS in which they have a private interest, and will record any constituency interest in the interests of transparency; and
- Avoid expressing views that may be perceived as pre-determining the contents of the draft Airports NPS or the outcome of the consultations or policy development or implying that the results of the consultations have not been conscientiously taken into account.

## **In order to make it clear that these principles are applied:**

- Separate teams within the Department for Transport will oversee the drafting of, and consultation upon, the draft Airports NPS. These teams will maintain separation from the team within the Department for Transport that will manage engagement with the preferred scheme promoter;
- No scheme promoter, or other stakeholder will be allowed access to the responses of stakeholders or other consultees (unless confidentiality has been waived by the respondent), except in a manner that enables equal access to other parties (for instance, by publishing them simultaneously); and
- Care will be taken where Ministers may have, or might be perceived to have, a constituency interest in the development of the draft Airports NPS – which will be a matter of public record.

## **Ongoing engagement with Stakeholders**

Applying these principles does not prevent all contact with organisations or individuals who have made representations, or have an interest in the draft Airports NPS. Ministers and officials may engage with stakeholders including (but not limited to) local authorities, transport bodies, public interest groups and environmental stakeholders, and will:

- Meet with stakeholders to discuss wider policy issues, and engage with other airport operators in relation to their operations, provided they understand that Ministers and officials will not comment on the merits of content in the draft Airports NPS;
- Continue, so far as is proper, to facilitate progress on aspects of the delivery of the Government's preferred scheme, but always on the understanding that this does not prejudice the consideration, development and designation of the draft Airports NPS; and
- If necessary, express a view on matters relevant to the delivery of the Government's preferred scheme, provided that such views are, and can properly be expressed without prejudicing any conclusions on the draft Airports NPS.

## **Engaging with the government's preferred scheme promoter**

Because the Government has a policy interest in the delivery of additional airport capacity in the south-east and will need to play a role in enabling this, Ministers and officials will continue to engage with the preferred scheme promoter during the consultation process, and up to the point of designation of an Airports NPS. During this time, so that development and designation of an Airports NPS takes place transparently, the following principles will apply:

- The Government will not, under any circumstances, share information relating to the content of or consultations on the draft Airports NPS in the course of engagement with the preferred scheme promoter, other than where that information has already been released into the public domain;
- The teams at the Department for Transport overseeing consultation on, and development of, the draft Airports NPS will maintain an appropriate degree of separation from colleagues dealing with the preferred scheme promoter;
- An appropriate written record of discussions between the Ministers and officials who are engaging with the preferred scheme promoter and those officials in the Airports NPS team will be maintained where discussions relate to the content of the draft Airports NPS; and
- Where Ministers and officials continue to meet with the preferred scheme promoter to develop the best possible package of measures for the UK and to mitigate the impacts on local people, such engagement will be recorded in writing.

The consultation will be undertaken in line with the government consultation principles.