

PRESS RELEASE

2 June 2025

For immediate use

AIRSPACE MODERNISATION ALREADY UNDERWAY AND IS NOT BEING DRIVEN BY HEATHROW EXPANSION

The Government has made a disingenuous link between Heathrow expansion and airspace modernisation, in its plans to modernise airspace laid before Parliament today.

In their press release, the government stated that redesigned flight paths will ‘propel airport expansion’, as part of the Government’s ‘Plan For Change’, but, in fact, the much-needed plans for airspace modernisation have been progressing for many years and will take place irrespective of plans for airport expansion, which takes place as part of a separate process in the planning system. This piece of information features at the very end of the press release in the notes section despite propelling growth being a headline feature of the story.

Around Heathrow Airport, where flight paths have not changed since the 1960s, airspace modernisation will enhance the capacity in the skies above the country to handle more aircraft. The impact will result in greater concentration of flights down existing flight paths meaning communities may experience more intense noise and more frequent noise.

Heathrow have spent the past three years developing airspace change proposals for a 2-runway airport as part of the modernisation programme and engagement with stakeholders including local communities. Any airspace changes associated with a third runway would be a separate process that would either need to integrate with work done to date or to restart the airspace design from the beginning. Either way the plans will be extremely complex and will take time, with details on flight path changes not expected to be made public until 2027/28 at the earliest.

Paul McGuinness (Chair, No 3rd Runway Coalition) said:

“The outcome of airspace modernisation is to enable yet more planes to increase the adverse impact on already overflowed neighbourhoods, whilst also bringing that blight to previously unaffected areas, it can only be bad news for Londoners and the many other conurbations around Heathrow Airport.

“Per capita, Heathrow’s noise foot print is thirteen times greater than that of Schiphol Airport which, itself, is currently decreasing flight numbers to reduce its adverse noise impact. And this is even before any plans for Heathrow expansion, which intends to increase the number of flights by 54%, which would adversely impact up to 2.2million Londoners.”

ENDS.

Notes:

- 1) DfT Press release, 1 June 2025 <https://dft-newsroom.prgloo.com/news/redesigned-flight-paths-to-deliver-quicker-quieter-flights-and-boost-growth>

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