

## Press Release

7 September 2023

*For immediate use*

### **Taxpayers to face huge bill if Heathrow 3<sup>rd</sup> runway goes ahead**

The Government has confirmed that it would consider funding public transport upgrades associated with Heathrow expansion, if the project were ever to go ahead (1). This is despite their insistence that the project is funded by the “private sector”. A cross-party group of MPs led by Munira Wilson, Liberal Democrat MP for Twickenham, wrote to the Transport Secretary in July following concerns that taxpayers could face a huge bill if a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway went ahead (2).

In a reply to the MPs during the summer break, the Minister for Aviation, Maritime and Security confirmed that:

- The Government will consider whether it will make a contribution to certain works which have wider public benefits (including rail schemes such as Western Rail Access and Southern Rail Access). However, until an application is put forward, they will not make an assessment of these costs.
- The Government expect Heathrow to fund the surface access upgrades that are required to physically enable a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway to operate. This includes works to the M25, A4 and A3044, as well as local road changes. Heathrow previously submitted a proposal to tunnel part of the M25 to enable a new runway to be constructed over it (3).

The letter also confirmed that public transport mode share targets outlined in the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) must be met. This means 55% of airport users must use public transport by 2040. Currently, the figures hovers around 37% (4).

Debate about the actual costs of the additional schemes varies, with the original costs outlined in the Department for Transport’s ANPS placing the costs at a minimum of £5bn. Heathrow have previously only committed £2bn (5). Transport for London estimated that all the additional surface access schemes would cost around £15-£20bn (6). This would be necessary to meet the ANPS requirements of the number of airports users on public transport.

However, all these figures are now extremely out of date, having been prepared at least five years ago. For example, £5bn in 2018, when the ANPS was prepared, equates to £6.2bn now and £15bn equates to £18.2bn.

It is extremely likely that a revised proposal for Heathrow expansion would accrue significantly higher costs for road and rail upgrades and, therefore, the contribution by the taxpayer is also likely to be substantially higher than previously thought. The costs of the

materials required to build a third runway will have also increased, too, so the overall cost of the project is likely to far exceed estimations put forward in the ANPS.

Over the weekend, it emerged that Heathrow was gearing up to resubmit plans for a third runway, following a pause since the pandemic (7). Campaigners believe that political parties must state, prior to a general election, whether they would subject taxpayers to the huge costs likely to be incurred if they were to approve any expansion in the next Parliament, as well as other issues such as more noise and air pollution that would arise from the building of a new runway at Heathrow.

**Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3<sup>rd</sup> Runway Coalition, said:**

*“Heathrow expansion is an enormously expensive project which, if it went ahead, would likely require huge contributions from the taxpayer. And to whose benefit? For it is not the communities around the airport who will benefit, but Heathrow’s shareholders. Why should the Government potentially commit to spending billions of pounds, particularly when it says that this is a private sector project. They can’t have it both ways.*”

*“Political parties must rule out subjecting taxpayers to this huge bill both in the run-up to, and after, the next election.”*

**Munira Wilson, Liberal Democrat MP for Twickenham, said:**

“With plans for a 3rd runway at Heathrow potentially taking off again, taxpayers have a right to know if they’re going to have to foot the bill for the huge public transport upgrades that would be needed.

“It’s high time the Government come clean and clarify once and for all who will plug the minimum £3bn gap between what Heathrow has said it will pay, and the estimated costs.”

ENDS.

Notes:

1. Letter to MPs from Aviation Minister (8 August 2023)
2. Letter to DfT from MPs (18 July 2023) <https://twitter.com/munirawilson/status/1682386171832180737>
3. Heathrow expansion over M25 <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/heathrow-plans-runway-over-m25-in-30-year-expansion-f58v9f2ts>
4. Heathrow public transport mode share 2017-2021 <https://www.heathrow.com/content/dam/heathrow/web/common/document/s/company/about/company-information/2022-Surface-Access-Strategy.pdf> p. 9

5. Heathrow's £2bn commitment for surface access upgrades <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/7559/pdf/>
6. TfL's estimate of Heathrow expansion surface access upgrades <https://www.london.gov.uk/who-we-are/what-london-assembly-does/questions-mayor/find-an-answer/surface-access-heathrow>
7. Heathrow revising plans for third runway (3 Sep 2023) <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2023/09/02/rishi-sunak-reject-net-zero-demand-airport-expansion/>

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