

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate use

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HEATHROW SEEKS INTERIM EXPANSION BEFORE 3RD RUNWAY

Heathrow Airport has announced its intention to seek a smaller form of expansion prior to a 3rd runway.

Speaking about expanding the Airport, CEO Thomas Woldbye told Press Association news agency that the airport will publish a “revised strategy” in the coming weeks, which will include plans for expansion and increasing capacity by alternative methods (1).

Woldbye said: *“We need to not only focus on the third runway of course – which needs to be updated so we have the right facts for that decision, we’re going to make that a reality in the right way – but also what kind of capacity can we create within the current boundaries of Heathrow to make sure that we can serve our passengers as best as possible.”*

The comment about the kind of capacity that can be created before a 3rd runway suggests Heathrow is intending to increase its capacity based on a two-runway airport.

This additional capacity could be facilitated by the introduction of mixed mode, allowing planes to arrive and depart on the same runway. Previous estimates suggest this could permit an additional 60,000 aircraft movements per year, taking the limit from its current cap of 480,000 to 540,000 (2).

Another example of expansion short of a third runway that the airport could pursue is expanding its taxiways, which would allow larger aircraft to take-off on the northern runway in an easterly direction, which is currently not possible. These plans are currently being assessed by Hillingdon Council, the local planning authority (3). Although the airport state that its intention with this project is to balance noise impacts from the airport in a fairer way, the infrastructure works associated with the project could allow for more planes to use the airport at a future date. Campaigners believe that it would make it more difficult for a future government to deny an increase in annual cap of flight numbers if necessary infrastructure is already in place.

Last month, Heathrow told a Local Community Forum that they were concerned about pursuing “anything with Heathrow on it” before a general election as it will attract controversy (4).

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

“Heathrow is now concentrating on “what kind of capacity can we create until we get to a third runway”, according to the airport’s new CEO. Yet Heathrow is already the world’s

most highly disruptive airport, by dint of its geographical location at the heart of the UK's most densely packed residential region.

“Communities around the Airport will rightly oppose any kind of expansion at Heathrow which leads to a deterioration in their quality of life. So any expansion is problematic. And not just for those who will be adversely impacted by yet more air traffic overhead. But because, as the Department of Transport recognised when examining a third runway there, any growth at Heathrow will draw flights away from other airports, with particularly negative impacts for the UK's regions.”

ENDS.

Notes:

- 1) <https://www.hackneygazette.co.uk/news/national/24133342.heathrow-lands-first-profit-since-2019-global-travel-rebound/>
- 2) [https://democraticservices.hounslow.gov.uk/\(S\(ljj1xvry0hxta3453exbha45\)\)/mgAi.aspx?ID=37309](https://democraticservices.hounslow.gov.uk/(S(ljj1xvry0hxta3453exbha45))/mgAi.aspx?ID=37309)
- 3) <https://planning.hillingdon.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/showDocuments?reference=41573/APP/2023/3159&module=pl>
- 4) https://www.no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk/_files/ugd/6eef7a_4747b096335d4e27bb768e7f7c900451.pdf

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