

PRESS RELEASE

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GRAYLING IGNORED AIR QUALITY IMPACT OF HEATHROW EXPANSION

The Secretary of State for Transport ignored expert Government advice when he decided to leave out large areas of the London conurbation from air quality studies for a 3rd runway at Heathrow. Consequently, serious health impacts were therefore not considered in determining the Government's support Heathrow expansion.

In 2015, when assessing the possible increase in Nitrogen Dioxide (Nox) and particulates emitted from aircraft, from an expanded Heathrow, the Airports Commission set a study area of just 2 kilometres from the expanded airport boundary (1).

However, in 2018, DEFRA concluded that Nox and particulates emissions from aircraft can be detected up to 20 kilometres away, and stated that *"a location such as Heathrow Airport, where aircraft tend to approach the airport from the east (flying over the London conurbation), there is potential for considerable exposure to Ultra Fine Particles from aircraft"* (2).

The DfT, under Chris Grayling, elected not to increase the assessed area from that of the preliminary study. The failure to make any assessment beyond just 2 kilometres from the expanded airport boundary was confirmed in a letter to the Transport Select Committee." (3).

To many Londoners, this may seem quite an omission. After all, it is not as if such data is not readily available. The London's Mayor's office's "London Local Air Quality Management Datastore" modelling shows that emissions by aviation extends to more than 20 kilometres from the current two runway airport's boundary - and so well beyond the mere 2km within the Secretary of State's assessment (4).

The No 3rd Runway Coalition assert that, through the failure to study health impacts from emissions outside this limited area, the Secretary of State has not properly assessed all impacts of the proposed expansion. The Coalition believe that, legally, this means he has acted in breach of his obligations under the Planning Act 2008 (5).

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

"Yet again, when it comes to Heathrow expansion, we have policy dictating which evidence is considered, rather than evidence-based policy. And on this occasion it is Air Pollution, with the Secretary of State appearing to have lazily accepted the limited scope of the preliminary enquiry simply to hasten the policy's progress. But to heedlessly ignore the potential damage to the health of local communities from air pollution, when empirical evidence demands a full assessment, is a staggering dereliction of duty."

A recent report by government department DEFRA has estimated that up to 44,750-52,500 deaths each year in the UK can be attributed to Nox and particulates (6). And in 2018, a study at King's College, London University concluded that more than 9,000 deaths in London (over which Heathrow planes arrive) are attributable to Nox and particulates (7).

ENDS.

Notes:

(1) The Airports Commission appointed Jacobs to conduct the preliminary study, and the engineering firm's report (2015) stated: "The "Principal Study Area" for each Scheme has been selected to focus on sensitive properties and habitats likely to be substantially affected by the Scheme and encompasses a 2km radius around each Scheme boundary".

(2) The DEFRA Air Quality Expert Group report on Ultrafine Particles in the UK stated that: "For example, a location such as Heathrow Airport, where aircraft tend to approach the airport from the east (flying over the London conurbation), there is potential for considerable exposure to UFP (Ultra Fine Particles) from aircraft". https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/library/reports.php?report_id=968

(3) In a letter to the Transport Select Committee, dated 23rd February 2018, Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling MP, confirmed that "Potential health impacts outside this area are not included", writing that:

"The DfT's approach assessed the health impacts on populations living within 2 km of the expanded airport using updated relationships between pollutant concentrations and mortality published by Defra and adjusted to take account of the higher demand projected in our updated demand forecasts. The study area, which captures over 98% of additional emission that could occur from expansion, was determined by the Airports Commission's consultants to include those locations where expansion was expected to make a significant contribution to ambient pollution levels. Potential health impacts outside this area are not included".

In other words, in terms of assessing Nox and particulates emissions from aircraft, the study area was confined to just a 2km radius around the boundary of an expanded Heathrow.

(4) London's Mayor's office's "London Local Air Quality Management Datastore"
<https://data.london.gov.uk/air-quality/>

(5) Section 5(3) Planning Act 2008 as there has been no study of the wider area for sustainability. It also breaches section 10(2), since without such a study the Secretary of State cannot make the assessment with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development, since he cannot know what it is as he has not completely studied it.

(6) In August 2018, a report by King's College London and published by the government's Committee on the Medical Effects of Air Pollutants (COMEAP) estimated that between 28,000 and 36,000 people die as a result of air pollution every year, and more than 9,000 in London.
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/news-article?id=41ef9e91-5796-4344-948b-8d7c0045bdfc>

(7) The Air Quality Expert Group of DEFRA estimates that the annual equivalent number of attributable deaths associated with the two pollutants combined is 44,750-52,500, with an associated annual social cost of £25.3 billion - £29.7 billion.

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