

Heathrow 'target' impossible to enforce

It is no surprise that Heathrow's Rob Gray once again smokescreens the real issues

(Viewpoint, September 19).

I refute his claim that I failed to recognise their commitments regarding transport and air quality around the airport.

He says that the expansion project will only be permitted if it can be delivered within strict and legally binding environmental targets – but he does not say that Heathrow's carefully chosen word 'target' relates to an unenforceable aspiration which is entirely different to 'enforcement'.

Mr Gray fails to admit that most of the current targets are not met today and this would be virtually impossible to remedy with an addition of at least 54 per cent more flights.

It must be emphasised that most of the current aircraft fleet will still be flying in 25 years time.

A few years ago Rolls Royce and Boeing engineers told the Heathrow Airport Consultative Committee that aircraft engines had already reached their maximum potential.

Mr Gray fails to admit that the future flight paths and their associated noise have yet to be planned and will not be published until after the Planning Inspectorate have decided on the application.

It seems that local councils have

responsibility for controlling air quality but no powers to differentiate and take action between aircraft pollution and what proportion of traffic pollution is airport related. Perhaps environmental experts could advise how the generators of carbon emissions can be pinpointed and controlled under a charging process.

The letter states that their plans include a detailed surface access strategy to increase the number of people travelling to and from the airport sustainably.

But their consultation papers clearly state that the rail provision is not part of their plan and Heathrow will not be assisting in the funding of new or upgraded railways.

The vehicle access charges will be particularly punitive upon all travellers outside the M25 as their public transport provision is skimpy compared with the multi layered round-the-clock services in London and its suburbs.

The cycling and walkways around the airport will only have limited benefit to local travellers and colleagues and like many other improved outside spaces the consultation documents state that they will only be provided if finance is raised from passenger levies and other sources other than Heathrow itself!

Those of us who live close to the airport

strongly dispute the assertion that while passenger numbers have increased by 80 per cent in 25 years airport related road traffic has remained broadly static – although perhaps that is an apt description for the greatly increased number of traffic jams.

The excuse for the two new car parks adjacent to the airport is the consolidation of existing spaces, but the consultation documents also refer to discontinuing employee parking and provision of alternative benefits – which could escalate the growing rogue parking problems while offering more passengers the opportunity to drive.

Mr Gray describes this project as of huge local and national significance, creating thousands of jobs locally.

That does not make sense in an already high employment region which has an acute housing crisis.

This last point links with the Airports Commission report which was adopted by Parliament.

It stated that Heathrow could need 70,400 more employees and businesses attracted to a larger Heathrow could raise that to around 100,000. The report concluded that 70,000 more family houses will be needed with 5,000 provided by each

of the 14 nearest councils.

That and all the extra school and hospital places plus road chaos will be a disaster for everyone except Heathrow's foreign owners.

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