

Heathrow expansion

The government's announcement that in principle it backs the idea of a new runway at Heathrow is likely to lead to a Parliamentary debate and vote soon.

I would be interested to hear constituents' views on this topic.

I have always accepted the general need for more airport capacity in the greater London region, but have not concluded on how this could be best achieved. Some think Gatwick could be expanded rather than Heathrow, some have argued for an entirely new airport to the east of London, some for incremental increases in capacity at a range of south eastern airports.

The government has concluded in favour of Heathrow expansion as the current hub airport with plenty of additional demand for slots and routes. The statement was brief and left many details to be sorted out a later date. Those seeking to expand the airport will need to demonstrate how they will hit demanding environmental targets. They will need full planning permission which will doubtless be a long and complex task to secure, with scope for people affected to seek changes or improvements to any individual proposal. The government and proposers of Heathrow expansion will need to strengthen and improve transport links into the airport, as these are already under pressure from present levels of air traffic.

I have lobbied extensively about the present level of aircraft noise, which increased following changes to routes made without consultation by NATs in 2014. The Statement did say that they wish to reduce aircraft noise, and propose to ban night flights for six and a half hours every night. The work I am doing on reducing aircraft noise does not require airport expansion to go ahead, as it relates to noise of aircraft, flying styles, rates of climb and descent and other matters. I will continue to press for less noise whatever the outcome of the vote about whether to build a new runway in several years time.