

Project for the Sustainable Development of Heathrow

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Transport (Derek Twigg): In the Air Transport White Paper, we promised to examine the scope for further development of Heathrow, consistent with environmental conditions. We are making good progress on this programme of work

In particular, the review of how to assess air quality around Heathrow, involving independent experts, has recently been completed and we will be publishing a full technical report shortly. A further statement will be made at the time, and copies of the report will be deposited in the Library.

The technical report will include data on air quality around the airport in recent years, comment on emissions sources, and recommend how these can best be represented and modelled in future years. We believe this process, which has itself been subject to peer review, will provide a solid basis for the remaining stages of the project.

In parallel, we have been working with BAA and others to identify how mixed mode might be operated at Heathrow, and its likely impacts in terms of noise and air quality in particular. The work so far has confirmed that the issues are complex. It will take some time to identify options, their impacts and the range of accompanying measures that might be needed to mitigate these, including steps to manage traffic on the surrounding road network. Similar considerations apply equally to the further assessment of the likely impacts of a third runway.

Accordingly, we think it prudent to defer public consultation. This will ensure that when we consult, it will be informed by the fullest possible assessment of impacts, and give consultees the best information on which they can make their responses.

17 March 2006.