



Please reply to
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Heathrow Consultation
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Dear Sirs,

Established in 1921, the Scottish Passenger Agents Association (SPAA) is the world's oldest travel trade association. Today SPAA is Scotland's largest travel trade association and represents the interests of all of Scotland's major travel agents, working alongside our Associate Members, which include many of the world's leading airlines, tour operators and cruise lines. Each of these sectors within the industry has an interest in the experience which is relevant to their customers when travelling through London Heathrow.

The Scottish Passenger Agents' Association welcomes the publication of the Government's consultation 'Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport'. Additional runway capacity at Heathrow is urgently needed and would provide major economic benefits for Scotland and the rest of the UK.

In an increasingly globalised economy, the international route network offered by Heathrow is crucial to Scotland's competitiveness. Although we would prefer more direct international flights from Scottish airports, and strenuous efforts are being made to

achieve this, we recognise that Heathrow's unique status as the UK's only major hub airport means that it can offer long-haul direct air routes that Scottish airports cannot. Heathrow's international route network is a national UK asset that is every bit as important to Scotland's future as it is to London's.

But Heathrow's two runways are operating at 99% of capacity, leading to regular delays and cancellations, particularly on domestic flights. The situation is set to get worse as in 2008 Heathrow is scheduled to reach its planning and operational cap of 480,000 flights. We are seriously concerned that continued capacity constraints at Heathrow will damage Scottish competitiveness for the following reasons:

- First, lack of runway capacity causes routine delays for passengers, with over half of arriving aircraft being held in stacks. This causes regular and unnecessary delays to connections from Scottish airports and affects the efficiency of our businesses. These delays affect our customers who miss connections and create baggage problems which cannot be easily resolved. Stacking also increases pollution.
- Secondly, lack of runway capacity means that small events, such as fog or strong winds, can cause widespread disruption as there are no available slots into which delayed aircraft can be scheduled. As recently as 28th January, some early fog at Heathrow resulted in British Airways and bmi cancelling domestic flights first, with resultant chaos which carried on throughout the day. Despite pleas to these airlines at our regular meetings we are assured that air traffic control flows and restrictions will always result in UK domestic and therefore predominantly Scottish flights being affected first.
- Third, the number of routes served by Heathrow is declining as airlines use scarce remaining slots to concentrate on the most profitable routes, cutting off vital links to Scottish regions. The number of UK domestic routes served by Heathrow has more than halved from 21 to 9 since 1990, and will drop to 8 at the end of March when the bmi route to Inverness is stopped. We are seriously concerned that

more routes to Scotland will be cut, or the frequency of flights will reduce, unless additional capacity is made available at Heathrow.

There have been calls for domestic flights to be replaced by high speed rail links. But rail is not a practical alternative for many Scottish destinations. Day return travel is an impossibility – even from the central belt. Only with huge investment would the journey time be reduced to an acceptable level, and even then it would not permit transfer connections to worldwide destinations to be made in an easy and acceptable fashion. Scotland is booming in terms of foreign direct investment and these businesses depend on fast efficient air links to/from Heathrow to allow quick and easy access to the global marketplace. Without such air links, overseas investors will by pass Scotland and concentrate their efforts elsewhere – not necessarily in the UK.

Global air links are also vital to Scottish tourism. 87% of international visitors to Scotland arrive by air, spending more than £1.4bn every year. Since 2001, there has been a 72% increase in international visitors to Scotland and more than 210,000 people are employed in tourism-related industries. If the connecting facilities are not up to scratch then these customers will simply spend their cash in other areas of the world.

Huge investment has been made at Terminal 5 and further huge investment is planned for the other existing terminals – all with the aim of improving the passengers' experience of Heathrow. If the aircraft cannot land and take off at the prescribed times then all of that investment will have gone to waste.

The consultation document on adding capacity at Heathrow shows that growth can be achieved within environmental limits. There will be no more noise overall than in 2002, air quality better than today, and improvements to public transport. On climate change, aviation's carbon dioxide emissions will be covered by the existing EU Emissions Trading Scheme long before a third runway is operational. If airlines want to fly more then they will have to pay for other industries to reduce their emissions. This means that the overall amount of carbon dioxide emissions in the atmosphere would not be allowed to increase as a result of a third runway at Heathrow.

We believe Heathrow is hugely important for the Scottish economy. It supports jobs and business – providing our main air links to many long-haul destinations. The introduction of mixed mode on the existing runways would cut delays at a stroke, while a third runway would allow airlines to reintroduce lost links to Scotland. The case for growth at Heathrow is strong and the Government's consultation shows that it does not have to be at the expense of the environment. We firmly support the introduction of additional capacity at Heathrow as quickly as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Sandy MacPherson', with a horizontal line underneath.

Sandy MacPherson
Immediate Past President
Scottish Passenger Agents' Association