

Boris attacks 'untold misery' of Heathrow open 24/7

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A proposal to run Heathrow 24 hours a day would inflict "untold misery on more than a million" people, Boris Johnson said yesterday. The mayor of London denounced the suggestion by Akbar al-Baker, the head of Qatar Airways and a Heathrow board member, as a potential catastrophe for London.

In a letter to *The Times*, Daniel Moylan, Mr Johnson's aviation adviser, calls into question the commercial interests underpinning a suggestion from Mr al-Baker that the objections of people living under the flight path should be overlooked in favour of round-the-clock operations. The

mayor has commissioned analysis by the Civil Aviation Authority that shows more than a million people will suffer harmful noise if the airport is allowed to build a third runway.

The analysis, to be submitted to the Airports Commission on Friday, shows that people living in Kensington, Chelsea, Chiswick, Egham, Southall and Deptford would be subjected to noise levels identified by health chiefs as potentially harmful if Heathrow's expansion plans are approved. Neither the airport, nor the main airlines which use it, are pressing for a relaxation of night flight restrictions, currently limiting the number of flights between



11.30pm and 6.30am to 16. However, Mr al-Baker proposed the change and said that people living close to the airport would quickly get used to the noise.

Mr Johnson said: "Heathrow is already the most noise-polluting airport in Europe and it would be catastrophic for the quality of life of Londoners if aircraft were allowed to take-off and land 24 hours a day ... Do these people not deserve a decent night's sleep?"

Mr Moylan writes: "It must frustrate Heathrow's largely foreign institutional shareholders that Britain

Boris Johnson said Londoners deserved a decent night's sleep

puts an emphasis on individual freedom that Akbar al-Baker considers "excessive". Mr al-Baker, who represents Qatar's sovereign wealth fund, which owns 20 per cent of Heathrow, said: "I know people require freedom but I think this is too excessive. If you live under the flight path, I assure you, over a period of time you will not even hear the aircraft passing over your house."

Heathrow claimed that the number of people affected by noise would fall by 30 per cent if it was allowed to build a third runway northwest of the existing airport. However, its calculation was made using a higher noise threshold than that set by Heathrow and the government. Letters, page 29