

Press Release

29/6/14 for immediate use

Heathrow's noise claims do not stack up according to new reports

Heathrow's claims that a third runway will improve the overall noise climate for residents do not stack up, according to campaign group HACAN (1). It has compared Heathrow's arguments with the findings of two recently-published reports and concludes that "Heathrow's claims are unraveling in the face of the independent evidence."

HACAN tested Heathrow's evidence against the arguments put forward by the Civil Aviation Authority (2) in its new report on noise and the findings of a report from the consultancy firm Atkins carried out for the Mayor of London (3). The most damning indictment of Heathrow came from the Atkins report which showed the airport's claim that a third runway will mean "at least 30% noise reduction" by 2030 is based on the assumption that the new runway will be only operating at one-third capacity. At full capacity, Atkins shows, over one million people will be impacted, up from 725,000 today.

Both reports challenge Heathrow's prediction that 90% of the planes using the airport in 2026, when any new runway is expected to open, will be the quieter 'new generation' aircraft. And they are dismissive that the proposed steeper landing approaches Heathrow wants to introduce will have any significant impact on noise levels.

Atkins verdict on Heathrow's plans to increase respite for residents is damning. It argues that most communities will get less respite than they do today if a third runway is built. At present people in West London enjoy a half day's break from the noise when planes switch runways at 3pm. This would be cut to a third if a new runway is built in order to give people under the new flight paths some respite.

HACAN chair John Stewart said, "We used the new reports to reality check Heathrow's claims. The Airport came out badly. Most of its claims do not have a ring of truth about them. We could only award them 2 out of 5 on our reality score card."

Stewart added: "Heathrow understands the need to deliver on noise. It is the biggest political barrier to a third runway. And its new proposals are an improvement on what went before but these two new independent reports illustrate the near-impossibility of sorting out noise at Heathrow."

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