The Great British **Runway Myth**

....why there is no need for any new runway in the south east!

aef Aviation Environment Federation

Demand **is NOT** increasing....

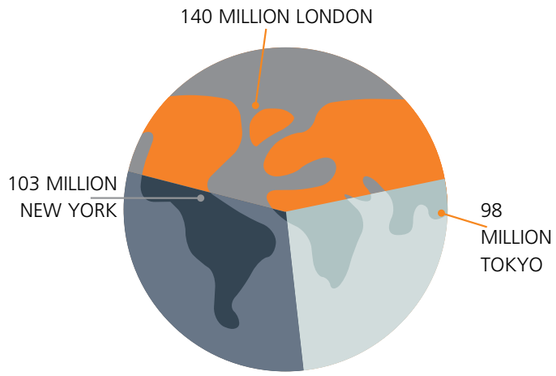
THE LONDON AIRPORT SYSTEM CONSISTS OF HEATHROW, GATWICK, STANSTED, LUTON,CITY AND SOUTHEND

"Stansted is only 50% full, and will not reach full capacity until the late 2040s".[3]

A massive lobbying campaign by the aviation industry, the study by the Airports Commission of rival runway proposals, and innumerable press articles speculating on potential sites have created an impression among most members of the public, and many politicians, that a new runway is essential and inevitable. **Not so....**

Taken together, London's five major airports serve more destinations than any other European city.[1]

- The London airports system is larger than that of any other city in the world – serving more than 140 million passengers compared to approximately 103 million passengers at New York airports and 98 million passengers at Tokyo airports.[2]



- Most commentators focus on the number of air passengers. However, in relation to runway capacity, the important issue is the number of air transport movements (ATMs). Since 2000, the number of ATMs in the UK has grown by just 0.6%.[4]
- Over the same period, the number of UK air passengers has grown by 32% The explanation is that airlines are using larger aircraft with fewer empty seats.

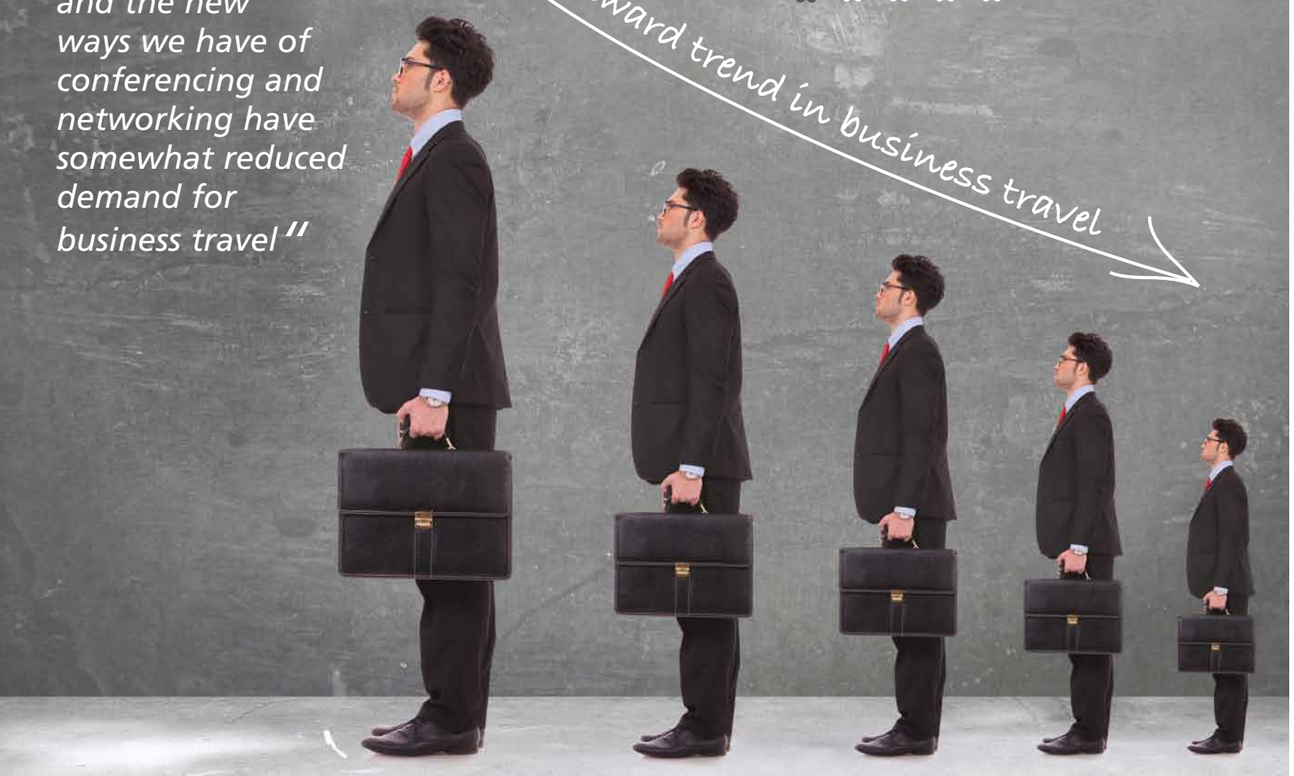
- Stansted is only 50% full, and Luton only 55%. If aviation is kept with climate change limits, Stansted will not reach full capacity until the late 2040s.[3]

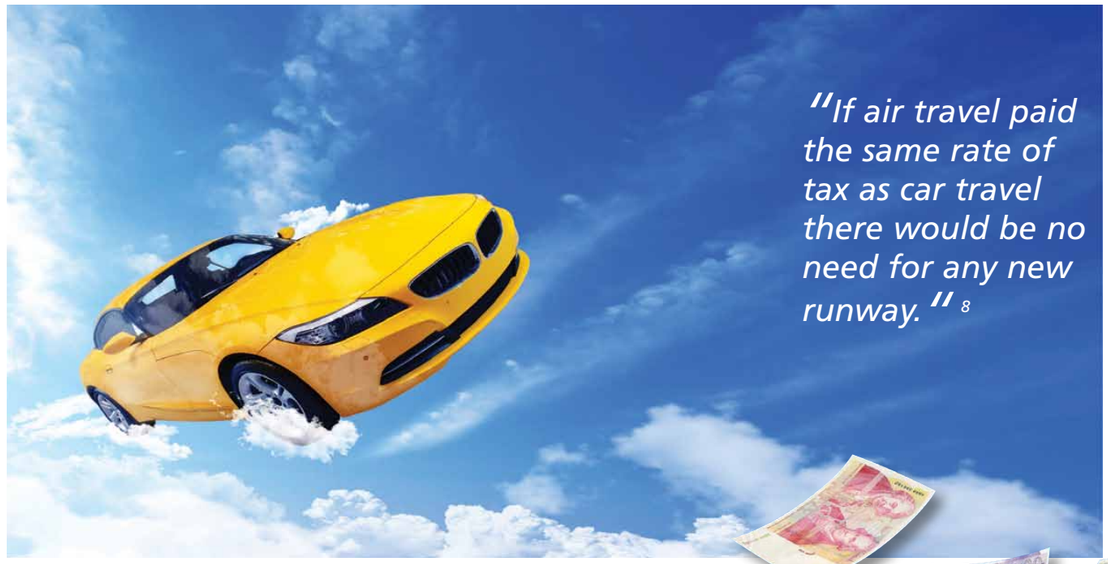
Shrinking demand for **business travel**....

Business travel has fallen both in percentage terms and in absolute terms over the past 15 years.[5]

- Business flights accounted for less than a sixth of all international travel to/from UK airports last year.[6]
- There is no evidence that UK business travellers are missing out on international opportunities due to a shortage of airport capacity in the South East.
- If there was demand for ten times as many daily flights to China, airports in the South East could handle that tomorrow, without any additional runway capacity[7]

"The continuing rise in global telecommunications and the new ways we have of conferencing and networking have somewhat reduced demand for business travel"





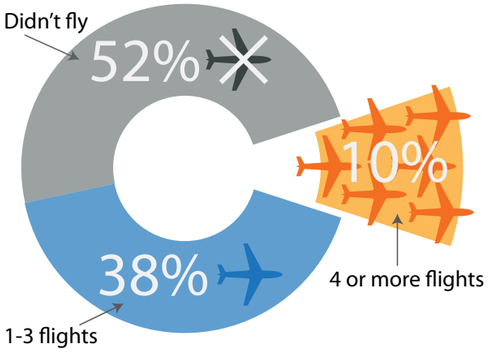
"If air travel paid the same rate of tax as car travel there would be no need for any new runway."[8]

Aviation growth inflated by **tax subsidies**

The expansion of air travel is based on massive tax concessions. Air Passenger Duty would need to be more than four times its current level to match the value of the industry's blanket exemption from fuel duty and VAT.[9]

If aviation paid fair taxes there would be even less need for a new runway.

The main benefit of these tax concessions does not go to the poor. ABC1s are the predominant users of leisure air travel (74%) and the average household income for leisure flyers in 2013 was £52,100.[10]



"52% of the UK population did not fly at all last year whereas 10% flew four or more times, accounting for almost half (47%) of all flights."[11]

"There is plenty of scope for achieving more passengers per plane with a shift toward larger aircraft, a steady decline in perceived future demand for regional jets (fewer than 90 seats) and a volatile market for large jetliners (747 size or bigger)".

Larger aircraft.....

In 2014 the average number of passengers per flight at Heathrow, and at Gatwick, was just under 150.[12] These figures are relatively small (even after taking into account that on average aircraft are about 80 per cent full) compared to the 220 seating capacity of an Airbus 321, or to the new Boeing 787 Dreamliner which can seat up to 290 (or in its new version, 330), or to the A350 which when it comes into service is due to carry up to 445 passengers, or to the long-serving 777 which can seat up to 450, let alone the Airbus380 which can seat 500 – 800.

The Airports Commission have argued that the very large aircraft such as the A380 are proving less popular than

long-range medium-sized aircraft. But the vast majority of flights from London airports are by small aircraft which over the next twenty years, especially if slots are scarce, are likely to be replaced by larger aircraft.

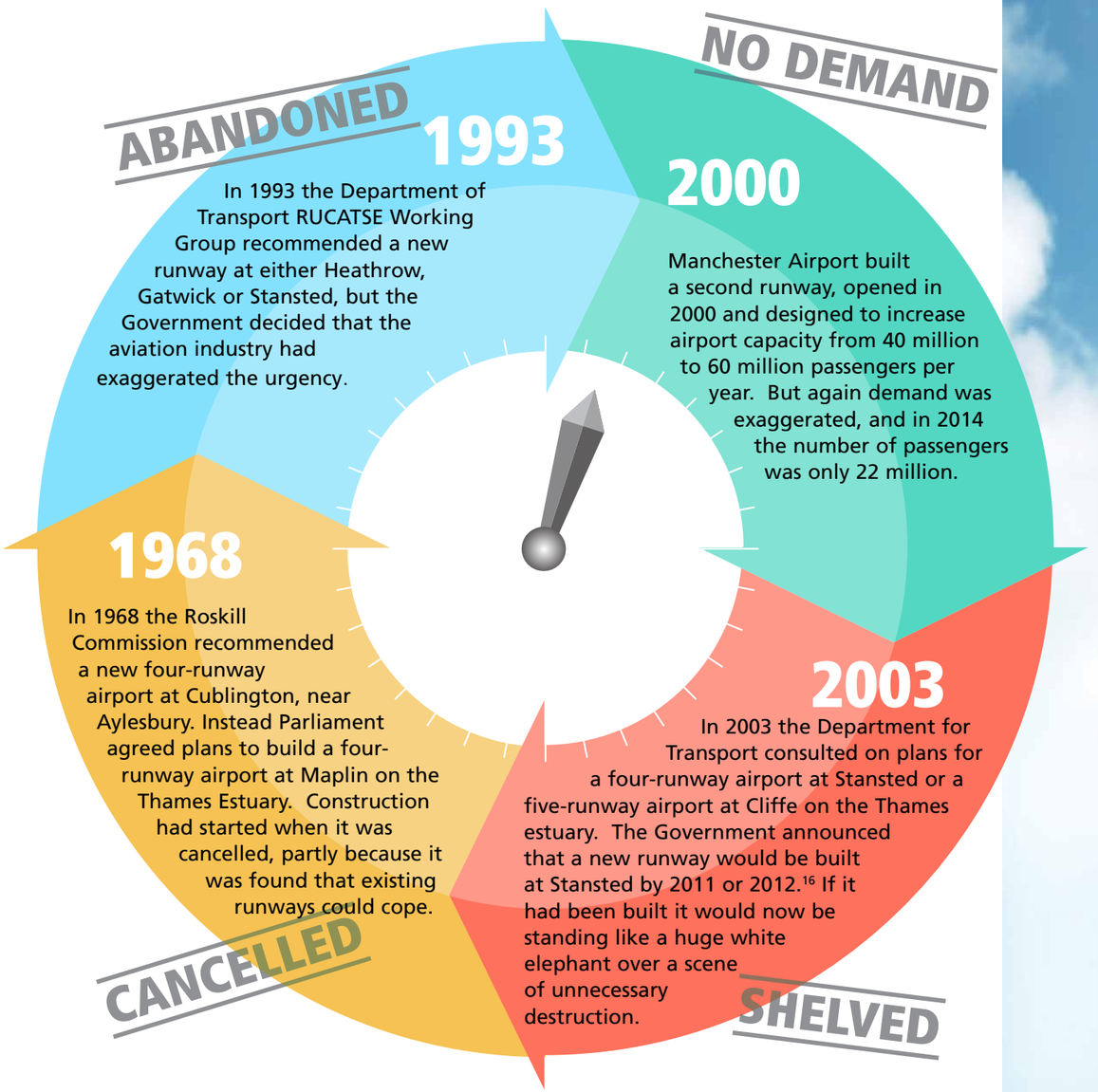
Another factor is the proportion of seats filled. Today the average is around 80% but some airlines manage to achieve over 90%.[13] If all airlines could do the same, the improvement would be equivalent to one half of a new runway.

The **north-south** divide....

- The South East accounts for one third of the UK population[14] but its airports handle nearly two-thirds of UK air travel.[15]
- The Airports Commission argues that a new runway would be good for everyone. But in fact its own modelling suggests that traffic at regional airports would fall on average if a new runway was built at either Heathrow or Gatwick compared to a 'no new runways' scenario.
- The Committee on Climate Change (set up by Act of Parliament), recommends that UK aviation must operate within a fixed carbon emissions cap, requiring passenger growth to be limited to 60% over 1990 levels. If a new runway was allowed to use up most of the growth available under this carbon cap, traffic in every region of the UK would be lower than without expansion.
- It would make no sense to build a new runway if it simply redistributed traffic around the UK and increased congestion in the South East.

Haven't we **been here** before?....

Ever since Gatwick and Heathrow airports opened for business in the Thirties and Forties, arguments have raged over how best to cater for Britain's percieved demand for air travel. Time and time again the forecasts proved wrong.... it's deja vu all over again!



Climate constraints

Most aviation lobbying for new runways overlooks the fact that aviation is one of the fastest growing contributors to climate change[17] while the Airports Commission has ignored the fact that the climate impact of aircraft operating at altitude is significantly greater than that associated with aircraft carbon emissions alone.

The Commission has based its work on either a 'climate-traded' model where it is assumed that an international emissions trading scheme has been introduced; or on a 'climate-capped' model in which the growth of aviation is kept within limits set under the Climate Change Act. But delivering either model will be challenging. Agreement on a worldwide carbon trading scheme for aviation still faces political hurdles, and the Commission has been unable to come up with a credible plan for meeting the additional requirements of UK climate legislation if a new runway goes ahead.

There is no practicable way to constrain emissions to the level required by the Climate Change Act unless we say no to new runways.

Summary

The case for a new runway disappears after taking account of:

- ✈ THE TREND TOWARDS LARGER AIRCRAFT
- ✈ OPPORTUNITIES FOR HIGHER LOAD FACTORS
- ✈ ANTICIPATED GROWTH AT OTHER AIRPORTS
- ✈ THE NEED TO REDUCE SUBSIDY REPRESENTED BY TAX-FREE FUEL AND NO VAT
- ✈ THE IMPORTANCE OF KEEPING DEMAND WITHIN CLIMATE CHANGE LIMITS.

References

(Endnotes)

1 Airports Commission Interim Report December 2013.

2 Airports Commission. Discussion Paper on Airport Operational Models. Paragraph 4.42.

3 In 2014 Stansted handled just under 20 million passengers. The Airports Commission Interim Report indicated that it would be full by 2041, but that refers to the local authority cap of 35 million. It is reasonable to assume that cap would be lifted so that the full capacity of 45 million could be used.

4 In 2000 number of ATMs – 2,045,484; in 2014 – 2,058,543. CAA Airport Traffic Statistics for 2014 and 2000, Table 6.

5 CAA Airport Traffic Statistics for 2014 and 2000.

6 Office of National Statistics ('ONS') 'Travel Trends' to 2013 and ONS Travel & Tourism Quarterly Release for 2014.

7 There are currently 7 scheduled flights per day from the UK to China, all from Heathrow. Stansted alone already has the capacity and planning consent to enable it to handle 100 return flights per day to China, if the demand existed.

8 Because higher air fares would slow the rate of growth. Department for Transport 2003. http://www.aef.org.uk/2004/12/10/the-hidden-cost-of-flying-2003/.

9 AirportWatch/AEF analysis based on April 2014 fuel duty rates and comparative total fuel consumption for road transport and UK civil aviation in 2014.

10 'Passenger Survey Report', 2013, CAA, October 2014. Derived from Tables 14 & 15.

11 'Public experiences of and attitudes towards air travel: 2014', DfT, July 2014.

12 CAA Airport Traffic Statistics 2012, Tables 01 and 06.

13 CAA Environment Report 2014.

14 UK 2011 Census data, includes East Anglia.

15 CAA Airport Traffic Statistics, 2014, Table 1. Again, this includes East Anglia.

16 Air Transport White Paper. December 2003.

17 Market Based Mechanisms to Curb Greenhouse Gas Emissions from International Aviation. WWF 2015.

18 Hansard,13 July 2015.

It has become clear that the environmental and economic disadvantages of a new runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick are so great that the option of NO new runway should be given renewed consideration.

The Airports Commission failed to study this option seriously.

The reason is simple: if that had been their conclusion after nearly three years work and a cost of £12.7 million[18] they would have looked foolish.

Aviation Environment Federation

Published by Aviation Environment Federation
40 Bermondsey Street, London SE1 3UD
T. 0203 102 1509
www.aef.org.uk
E. info@aef.org.uk
twitter.com/The_AEF