

# Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign

# GACC

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## Runway: state of play

All appears quiet on the runway debate. The Government has promised a decision 'this summer'. That could be July or September. If in July it is likely to be after the referendum on 23 June but before the House rises for the summer recess in mid-July.

The apparent quiet, however, conceals intense work by the civil servants in the Department for Transport (DfT). They are working to see how a new runway at Heathrow, as unanimously recommended by the Airports Commission, can be made compliant with the legal pollution limits, and how the project can be made immune to judicial review. But at the same time they are looking at whether Gatwick may still be a viable alternative.

**Gatwick Airport Ltd is continuing their high pressure lobbying, and there is a very real risk that the Government will go for Gatwick, as the easier option.** That would mean eventually doubling the size of the airport, with twice as many aircraft in the sky, three times as many people affected by noise, huge pressure on roads, rail, schools, hospitals etc.

The decision will be taken by Cabinet on the advice of a Cabinet subcommittee. The chairman of the subcommittee is David Cameron, and the members are George Osborne, Patrick McLoughlin, Sajid Javid, Liz Truss, David Mundel, Greg Clark, Amber Rudd, Oliver Letwin and Mark Harper.

## Research studies

Some anti-runway protesters believe in getting publicity through stunts, but stunts are unlikely to have much influence on the Cabinet sub-committee or the DfT civil servants. Some, such as Plane Stupid, believe in getting attention by sitting on the runway: we applaud their determination to oppose any new runway but do not support breaking the law. Instead we believe that the best way to influence the decision is by producing hard facts.

We have therefore commissioned a series of research studies on various aspects of the proposed Gatwick runway. Each will be by a separate expert author and written in a semi-academic style.

The first, on *Ambient Noise*, shows that aircraft noise is more annoying, and annoys more people, in areas where the background noise is low, as in the rural areas around Gatwick. It thus proves that the oft quoted comparison between the many people affected by noise at Heathrow and the comparatively few affected at Gatwick is invalid. It is available on our website at [www.gacc.org.uk/research-studies](http://www.gacc.org.uk/research-studies).

The second study, *Paying for a New Gatwick Runway*, will be published soon, to be followed by a study into how Gatwick manages to avoid paying any corporation tax. Further studies will be posted as published during the next two months.

## Flight path decisions

Gatwick Airport have announced the actions they are proposing to take following the independent review of arrival flight paths.<sup>1</sup>

They have also been undertaking consultation on a plan to alter departure route 4 (take-off to the west, turn right over Holmwood, Betchworth, and Reigate) so as to ensure that aircraft make a tighter turn bringing them over Leigh (Surrey).

Gatwick were forced into undertaking these changes because for the past two years complaints about aircraft noise have been running six times as high as previously, and so has the number of people making complaints.

Because GACC represents the whole area around Gatwick, which includes those areas where there are no local flight path protest groups - our members come from all over - we do not support or oppose specific plans to move flight paths from one area to another. Nevertheless Gatwick's intention to try to alleviate the misery has been broadly welcomed by GACC.

**For arrivals the most important change is to widen the swathe** in which aircraft approach from the south from 10-14 nautical miles to 8-14 nautical miles.<sup>2</sup> That will help to achieve what many protest groups want – a 'fair and equitable' distribution of flights. But GAL give no details of how aircraft are to be distributed within this wider swathe. This change is subject to agreement by NATS (air traffic control) and the CAA, and will be subject to 'community engagement' between now and May 16.

The main other actions include

Proposal	Date	GACC comments
Airbus320 aircraft to be fitted with noise reduction device to end 'whine'.	By end 2017	<i>Good, but will the penalty for non-compliance be tough enough?</i>
Continuous descent approaches to start at 8,000 ft instead of 6,000 ft.	December 2016	<i>Welcome. Will reduce noise for areas at 18 – 25 miles from airport.</i>
Stacks to be moved out over the sea.	Discussions to start 2016, but years away	<i>Welcome for areas such as South Downs National Park and Heathfield-Battle area. Too slow.</i>
Timed arrivals - adjusting the speed of aircraft to reduce the need to stack.	Progress report December 2016	<i>Welcome. Also good for reducing CO<sub>2</sub>. Too slow.</i>
Time based separation.	Progress report by January 2017	<i>This is designed to <u>increase</u> the number of aircraft using Gatwick. Not welcome.</i>
Stop limiting people to only one complaint a day.	September 2016	<i>This was always a stupid policy, bound to increase anger. Glad to see the end of it !</i>
Local councils to be told not to build houses, schools or hospitals under flight paths.	June 2016	<i>Ridiculous when Gatwick refuse to reveal where the flight paths for a new runway would be.</i>

Another recommendation accepted by Gatwick is to establish a Noise Management Board (NMB) with an independent chair, six official representatives, two local councillors and two representatives of community groups. This Board will have no power and it remains to be seen how effective it will be at reducing noise.

Consideration is being given by the DfT, CAA and NATS to introducing PRNAV (satellite navigation) for arrivals – which will mean a few concentrated arrival routes and partly undo the benefit of wider dispersal.<sup>3</sup>

## Runway timetable

The Government has announced that a new runway will be progressed, not by a hybrid Bill (as for HS2), but as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project. What this means is that a Policy Statement will need to be approved by Parliament but that after that any public inquiry will be limited to six months with no scope to question the need for a new runway or its location.

The timetable may look like this.<sup>4</sup> Dates in blue are guesses by GACC. But all the dates may well be delayed by judicial reviews or by civil unrest.

1. Decision by the Government on the preferred location. It is not yet clear whether a House of Commons vote would be taken at this stage. [July or September 2016](#)
2. Draft National Policy Statement (NPS) published. [September - October 2016](#)
3. Public consultation on the draft NPS. [October 2015 - January 2016](#)
4. Commons Select Committee to examine the draft NPS and report to Transport Secretary within 12 weeks. [By April 2017](#)
5. Once a final NPS is laid, a House of Commons vote must be held within 21 days. [May 2017](#).
6. The developer submits a planning application to the planning inspectorate. [Summer 2017](#).
7. Planning inquiry. [January 2018 - July 2018](#).
8. The planning inspector has to report within three months. [Autumn 2018](#).
9. Transport Secretary has to announce a decision within three months. [January 2019](#).

However the Transport Secretary has stated that there is actually no need for a new runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick before 2030.<sup>5</sup>

Although this appears a long drawn out process, **the key decision will be taken this summer**. After that the protracted debate will merely be about detail.

## Judicial Review?

If this summer the Government decision is for Heathrow, Gatwick Airport have warned that they are likely to seek judicial review. This could be on air quality or on the forecast economic benefit, or both.

Conversely if the decision were for Gatwick, Heathrow Ltd have not indicated any intention to seek judicial review: they are perhaps content to retain their prime position and watch Gatwick struggle with the cost and aggro of a new runway. But there has been a suggestion that the Manchester Airport Group, which owns Stansted, might seek judicial review on the grounds that, if the Government decision shows they do not consider that there is a need for a hub airport, they and the Airports Commission were wrong to exclude Stansted from consideration.

If an application for judicial review is granted and taken to court, and probably to appeal and perhaps to the Supreme Court, it could take a year or more.

## Pollution worse at Gatwick than at Heathrow

Nine local MPs, who all oppose a second runway, have written to the Transport Secretary to ask him to stop Gatwick misleading the public that a second runway would mean no pollution problems. They show that in many respects the damage to air quality due to a new runway would be worse at Gatwick than at Heathrow.<sup>6</sup> Crispin Blunt MP said: “Gatwick’s environmental claims ignore the evidence and are misleading local residents. Gatwick repeatedly claims that it has never breached air quality limits and is the greener option for expansion. But independent evidence from the Airports Commission shows this to be untrue.’

## Gatwick two-faced

At the same time that Gatwick seek credit for alleviating the current airspace problems, they are spending millions on advertising and lobbying to promote a second runway with the aim of doubling the number of aircraft in the sky. They advertise all the benefits of a new runway but refuse to say where the new flight paths would go.

In 2015 there were 267,767 traffic movements (take-offs and landings). The purpose of a second runway, according to the Airports Commission, would be to raise this to 560,000 a year.<sup>7</sup>

All we know about the probable new flight paths is that both runways would be used for arrivals and take-offs (as at present). Departure routes would diverge soon after take-off bringing them over Warnham, Horsham and Copthorne.<sup>8</sup> There would have to be new flight paths over peaceful areas or double the number of aircraft on each existing route.

There would be two parallel straight approach paths, one as at present, and one 1km to the south. The new arrival flight paths would more than cancel out any benefits achieved as a result of the Arrivals Review.<sup>9</sup>

## Runway conditions

The Airports Commission suggested a number of conditions that should be imposed if the Government gives a Heathrow runway the go-ahead, and these were amplified by the Transport Select Committee. But no similar conditions have been published for Gatwick.

GACC has discussed with the Department for Transport what conditions should be imposed if the decision were for Gatwick. We have made it clear that this in no way lessens our opposition to a new runway. Even with the most stringent conditions, doubling the size of the airport would do huge environmental damage.

## CAA procedure for changing flight paths

The Civil Aviation Authority has issued a consultation on how to improve the procedure for altering flight paths. Responses have to be in by 15 June.<sup>10</sup> Certainly some of the recent consultations by Gatwick have been very poor quality. We would welcome members’ views in order to help shape our response.

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[http://www.gatwickairport.com/globalassets/publicationfiles/business\\_and\\_community/all\\_public\\_publications/2016/gatwick--response-document-action-plan-final-31mar2016.pdf](http://www.gatwickairport.com/globalassets/publicationfiles/business_and_community/all_public_publications/2016/gatwick--response-document-action-plan-final-31mar2016.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Most aircraft at present join the straight-in approach path from 10 to 12 nautical miles. Moving the inner join point to 7 miles is rejected on safety grounds.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201378%20final%20March%202016.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Based on statement by Patrick McLoughlin, Transport Secretary, 14 February 2016.

<sup>5</sup> 14 February 2016.

<sup>6</sup> See <http://www.blunt4reigate.com/news/gatwick-mps-call-transport-secretary-%E2%80%99Cgatwick-airport-must-end-misleading-air-quality-claims%E2%80%99D>

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<sup>7</sup> Consultation document November 2014.

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/371854/14-operational-efficiency--airspace.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371854/14-operational-efficiency--airspace.pdf) page 8

<sup>9</sup> For a diagram of the possible new flight paths with a second runway see

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/371854/14-operational-efficiency--airspace.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/371854/14-operational-efficiency--airspace.pdf) page 39

<sup>10</sup> [https://consultations.caa.co.uk/policy-development/proposals-for-revised-airspace-change-process/consult\\_view](https://consultations.caa.co.uk/policy-development/proposals-for-revised-airspace-change-process/consult_view)