

Heathrow Yes - But we need a decision on future capacity now says FTA

Responding to Heathrow Airport's release of *'Heathrow – A new approach'* which details its plans for expansion published today (Wednesday 17 July), the Freight Transport Association (FTA) has said that "the third runway is badly needed but an 'accelerated decision' on enhanced airport capacity to meet existing and future air-freight requirements that serve our international trade needs to be made 'sooner rather than later' and stalling on that decision was detrimental to the UK economy.

Heathrow has submitted new runway proposals to the Airports Commission stating that it will deliver the long term capacity and connections that the UK economy urgently needs. Recognised in the document is the importance of air freight pointing out the wider economic benefits to the economy, particularly from international trade and inward investment to the UK, productivity and agglomeration estimating the effects of a third runway ranging between £32 - £137 billion.

Previously (January 2013) FTA had submitted evidence to the Transport Committee regarding the expansion capacity at Heathrow stating that "it was essential to maintain London's international hub status, keeping UK goods and passengers connected to scores of global destinations and thereby supporting UK trade".

FTA believes that aviation policy can only be effective if freight issues are given full consideration, particularly given that freight carried on board passenger aircraft in many cases makes international airline routes more viable, and that logistics is a vital component of the UK's route network and overall economy both as an employer and in terms of the economic activity reliant on it.

Chris Welsh, FTA General Manager of Global and European Policy, said:

"FTA is always open to the possibility of a future airport elsewhere but Heathrow is our main hub airport now, and as it is full the need for a third runway is obvious, and are therefore, pleased to welcome the proposal for enhanced investment in capacity by Heathrow. We recognize that In a market-led economy it is investors who take the investment risks based on a range of criteria including customer preferences and obtaining a return on capital investment. For air-freight across the UK maintaining and enhancing our main air freight is vital to the UK economy.

"So much economic activity relies upon air freight across the UK, it is critical to economic recovery that the nation can demonstrate it is open for business with a smooth and reliable journey from our international gateways.

"FTA is concerned that stalling on the decision as to where and when the extra capacity for air-freight is going to be accommodated, and feel strongly that an accelerated process is needed in order to make the decision – sooner rather than later."