

Lies and half-truths from Gatwick

Stewart Wingate, Chief Executive Officer, Gatwick Airport, has published an open letter to all MPs. The full text is given below (in black), with comments (in red) from GACC.

This note does not attempt to put the full case against a second Gatwick runway. That was done in '*The case against a second Gatwick Runway restated*'. See <http://www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news.php>

Dear Member of Parliament,

A decision on airport expansion is fast approaching. If this situation feels familiar, it's because it is: we've had decades of delay during which successive Governments have tried and failed to expand Heathrow. **Not true.** **The only previous Government support for a new runway at Heathrow was in 2009-10.**

For the first time, though, Gatwick means that there is a real and credible alternative on the table. **Not true.** **In 2003 the Government considered Stansted a real and credible alternative. In 1970-74 Parliament approved plans for a new airport at Maplin, and construction had begun. Proposals for a second runway at Gatwick were put forward, but abandoned, in 1953, 1970, 1993 and 2003.**

Given the history of this debate there are real questions that need to be answered and there is a real choice to be made:

1. Do we want to choose a runway that history shows us can't be built, or do we want to choose a runway that can? **Not true.** **History does not show that a new Heathrow runway cannot be built. The proposal in 2009-10 was a different plan, with the runway in a different location.**

2. Do we want to choose a runway with astronomic costs whose delivery can't be guaranteed, or do we want to choose a runway that could be in action within ten years?

'Astronomic costs' is a great exaggeration. Even if the cost of a new runway at Heathrow is roughly twice the cost of a new runway at Gatwick, Heathrow has almost twice as many passengers, so the cost per passenger would be roughly the same.

The cost of the proposed north-west option at Heathrow is £17.6 billion but Heathrow Airport Ltd are reported to have produced plans for reducing this by £3 billion. The Heathrow Hub option claim that their plan is £6 billion cheaper.

3. Do we want to choose a runway that needs anywhere between five and twenty billion pounds of taxpayer subsidy, or one that requires no public funding? **Not true.** **The suggestion that a Gatwick runway would require no public funding is only correct if it is assumed that no improvements would be needed on the M25 or the Gatwick-London rail line. The probable cost of the necessary improvements would be around £10 billion according to Transport for London.**

4. Do we want to choose a runway that recreates the old airports monopoly, or one that promotes competition with more choice, lower fares and more resilience for the UK airport system? **For passengers, competition between airlines is more important. 'Lower fares' is misleading: a new Gatwick runway would mean a rise in airport charges per passenger from £9 to £15.**

5. Do we want to choose a runway that will limit long haul growth at the airports of our nations and regions, or a runway that will support balanced growth across the UK? **A new runway at either Heathrow or Gatwick would inhibit growth of long-haul services at other airports.**
6. Do we want to choose a runway that Treasury analysis says will generate lower net economic benefits for the UK, or one that will give Britain the growth it needs? **The Airports Commission found that a new runway at Heathrow would produce larger economic benefits than a Gatwick runway.**
7. Do we want to choose a runway where the financial risk will simply be passed directly to passengers and the taxpayer, or one whose risk will substantially be borne by its owners? **The promise by the foreign owners of Gatwick to bear the financial risk is not credible.**
8. Do we want to choose a runway whose construction, were it possible, would mean demolishing a village with 1,000 homes, and mean tunnelling under, diverting, or bridging the M25, ensuring at least 10 years of crippling roadworks, or do we want to choose a runway that can be built with relatively little disruption, because of the safeguarded land it would sit on? **The Heathrow Hub proposal would mean the demolition of not many more houses than at Gatwick, and far fewer commercial premises. It is claimed that the extended runway could be open in 2023, two years ahead of Gatwick.**
9. Do we want to choose a runway that would mean hundreds of thousands of extra planes flying over Central London, inflicting serious levels of noise pollution on around a million people, or a runway that would affect around 5% of that number? **‘A million people’ suffering serious noise pollution is untrue rubbish. The Advertising Standards Authority has banned a similar advertisement by Gatwick, stating: ‘...for the specific Heathrow scenario selected, while those newly affected was predicted to be 320,700, the number of people newly removed was 264,200 and therefore the net increase of people newly affected was 56,500. ... We therefore concluded that readers would not adequately understand the basis of the comparative claim and that it was therefore misleading.’ Source: [ASA Ruling on Gatwick Airport Ltd, 12 August 2015](#).**
- No mention that Heathrow has promised to ban night flights, and to provide respite periods during the day, with no similar promises from Gatwick.**
10. Do we want to choose a runway that will increase the air pollution around Heathrow, which is already way above legal limits, or do we want to choose a runway that will continue Gatwick’s record of never having breached air quality limits? **Misleading not to mention the promise by Heathrow Airport Ltd and Heathrow Hub not to release capacity if it would delay UK compliance with air quality limits.**

GACC
19 October 2016