

Oral statement to Parliament

Realising the benefits of expansion at Heathrow Airport

Enabling Heathrow expansion will drive economic growth and create jobs across the country.

From: **Department for Transport** (</government/organisations/department-for-transport>) and **The Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP** (</government/people/heidi-alexander>)

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I would like to update the House on the steps this government is taking to realise the benefits of expansion at Heathrow Airport, having invited proposals for a third runway earlier this year.

Today (22 October 2025), I am launching a review of the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS).

Britain wants to fly, and this government will act to meet public aspirations.

Our review of the ANPS will ensure that while we unlock long-term capacity for more flights at the nation's only hub airport, we will also meet our obligations to passengers, communities and the environment.

Today is a step forward for UK aviation and infrastructure – supporting growth in the economy and enabling a modern, efficient transport system that harnesses international investment, boosts connectivity and strengthens UK competitiveness.

We are committed to making a decision on a third runway at Heathrow within this Parliament and we are clear on our ambition to see flights taking off on a new runway in 2035.

We said we would get on with this – and we have.

When the previous government set up the Davies Commission, it took them 5 years to publish the original draft ANPS.

We'll get to the same point in 18 months, with the process completed by the end of 2026, showing our commitment to delivering progress swiftly, but also robustly.

When we say we back the builders, not the blockers, we mean it.

But this is not a blank cheque.

Expansion at Heathrow must minimise cost for passengers and customers. The taxpayer must not be expected to foot the bill.

That is why the scheme will be privately financed – both the core project and the related infrastructure improvements. Extra staff and passengers must be able to get to and from the airport without turning the M4 and the M25 into Europe's largest car park.

Crucially, the expansion must align with our legal, environmental and climate commitments.

Starting the review of the ANPS is critical to delivering expansion and will provide the basis for decisions on any future planning applications.

The world has changed since the last ANPS review in 2018, and when it was designated at that point. New environmental and climate obligations have been introduced and patterns of travel have changed.

Stand in pretty much any UK airport this summer, though, and you will have seen the busiest summer on record. We could put our head in the sand and pretend this isn't the case, but we would be doing a disservice to our economy and the next generation.

That is why, in carrying out this review, we will consider how any proposed scheme must meet 4 clear tests:

- that it contributes to economic growth across the country
- that it meets our air quality obligations
- that it is consistent with our noise commitments
- and crucially, that it aligns with our legal obligations on climate change, including net zero

We will seek the independent opinion of the Climate Change Committee (CCC) and I will be writing to them shortly to request this advice.

Whilst a third runway at Heathrow has been factored into Carbon Budget 6, it is right that we update our modelling and seek the views of the CCC.

Given the national importance of Heathrow, we will also consider naming the airport as Critical National Priority infrastructure, in line with our approach to low carbon energy projects.

We are further considering whether to name a statutory undertaker as an appropriate person to carry out the project under the Planning Act of 2008, providing additional clarity to stakeholders and the local community.

It is clear that this is a large and complex programme that requires a thorough and evidence led approach.

Over the coming months, my department will develop analysis on economic and environmental impacts of expansion.

We will also undertake an Appraisal of Sustainability, as required by statute, alongside a Habitats Regulations Assessment and other necessary technical work.

If amendments are needed to the ANPS as a result of the review, we expect to consult on an amended policy statement by next summer.

Communities will be able to have their say.

And we will shortly publish an updated stakeholder engagement approach to ensure transparency and fairness throughout the process.

Madam Deputy Speaker, earlier this year, we invited potential promoters to submit proposals for delivering a third runway at Heathrow.

Seven proposals were received and were considered by officials from the Department for Transport, from the Treasury and expert financial and technical advisers.

Following this assessment, 2 potential schemes remain under active consideration. A proposal from Heathrow Airport Limited and a proposal from the Arora Group.

We know we must provide as much clarity and certainty for communities, investors and users of Heathrow as soon as possible.

So we are [seeking further information on the 2 proposed schemes \(https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heathrow-expansion-next-steps-for-promoters\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heathrow-expansion-next-steps-for-promoters) with a view to reaching a final decision on a single scheme to inform the remainder of the ANPS review by the end of November.

When making this decision, we will consider:

- the interoperability of the proposed scheme with existing infrastructure
- the plans for transport to and from the airport and associated road schemes
- the land take and impact on surrounding homes and communities
- the evidence that the scheme can be privately financed
- the economic benefits of the scheme

This government is committed to moving quickly but we will also do this properly.

To deliver the scheme on time, the government is also pressing ahead with a series of enabling reforms:

- The Planning and Infrastructure Bill will streamline the delivery of major infrastructure, including Heathrow. This includes faster consenting routes and more proportionate consultations.
- On Judicial Reviews, we have announced that we will work with the judiciary to cut the amount of time it takes for a review to move through the court system for National Policy Statements and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects.
- We are establishing the UK Airspace Design Service to deliver modernised airspace. This will initially prioritise airspace design for the London region, supporting both Heathrow and the wider network. This will also make flight paths more efficient, so planes spend less time over London.
- We will initiate slot reform to ensure future allocation maximises benefits of an expanded Heathrow, as well as approved growth at Gatwick and Luton, for passengers, local communities and businesses.

Expanding Heathrow will be one of the largest infrastructure projects in the UK.

Rigorous and effective cost control will be essential to its success both in minimising any impact on airline charges and costs to passengers and in maintaining credibility with financial markets.

The government will therefore work with the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to review the framework for economic regulation for capacity expansion at Heathrow, ensuring the model provides strong incentives for cost effective delivery.

We expect the CAA to publish a working paper in November, with a view to this work completing next summer.

Madam Deputy Speaker, this is a landmark opportunity – for Heathrow, for the aviation sector, and for the UK economy.

The government remains fully committed to ensuring the expansion is delivered in a way that is timely, cost-efficient, and environmentally responsible.

I commend this statement to the House.

[Plans for Heathrow expansion accelerate as Transport Secretary unveils next steps](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-for-heathrow-expansion-accelerate-as-transport-secretary-unveils-next-steps) (<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/plans-for-heathrow-expansion-accelerate-as-transport-secretary-unveils-next-steps>) press notice, 22 October 2025.

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