

# Operating resilience of the UK's aviation infrastructure: A request for information

**CAP 1420**

Document ID: CAP 1420 2016

**Published by the Civil Aviation Authority, 2016**

Civil Aviation Authority,  
Aviation House,  
Gatwick Airport South,  
West Sussex,  
RH6 0YR.

You can copy and use this text but please ensure you always use the most up to date version and use it in context so as not to be misleading, and credit the CAA.

**First published June 2016**

Enquiries regarding the content of this publication should be addressed to: [Jonathan.Sharratt@caa.co.uk](mailto:Jonathan.Sharratt@caa.co.uk)

The latest version of this document is available in electronic format at [www.caa.co.uk](http://www.caa.co.uk), where you may also register for e-mail notification of amendments.

# Contents

---

|                                                   |           |
|---------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Contents.....                                     | 1         |
| <b>Chapter 1.....</b>                             | <b>2</b>  |
| Foreword .....                                    | 2         |
| Responses to this document .....                  | 4         |
| <b>Chapter 2.....</b>                             | <b>5</b>  |
| Introduction and background .....                 | 5         |
| <b>Chapter 3.....</b>                             | <b>8</b>  |
| Airport capacity and the consumer interest .....  | 8         |
| Consumer interest .....                           | 8         |
| Airport capacity declaration and scheduling ..... | 9         |
| <b>Chapter 4.....</b>                             | <b>13</b> |
| Optimising performance .....                      | 13        |
| Recent trends .....                               | 13        |
| Information provision .....                       | 18        |
| <b>Chapter 5.....</b>                             | <b>20</b> |
| How to respond and next steps .....               | 20        |

## Chapter 1

# Foreword

---

- 1.1 The UK already has some of the busiest and most productive airports in the world, facing challenges for maintaining day to day operating resilience (in this context, by resilience we mean the ability to anticipate, withstand and recover quickly from difficult day to day conditions<sup>1</sup>).
- 1.2 The Airports Commission delivered its final report and recommendations on the location of new UK runway capacity to the Government in July 2015. The Government has announced that it will make its decision on these recommendations in summer 2016.
- 1.3 The CAA has been clear in its advice to policy-makers in our responses to the Airports Commission<sup>2</sup>: consumers (passengers and cargo shippers) are already suffering from shortage of airport capacity in the South East of England - fewer routes and flights than there is demand for, more delay, higher prices and more fragile operations.
- 1.4 However, it will be at least 2025 before any new runway capacity in the South East of England will be opened, so whatever decisions are made by Government, the aviation industry must continue to work towards making existing infrastructure more resilient.
- 1.5 Aviation also relies on the limited resource that is airspace to ensure that passengers, businesses, the military and leisure flyers enjoy the many benefits aviation brings. The basic structure of the UK's airspace was developed over forty years ago. Since then there have been huge changes, including a hundred-fold increase in demand for aviation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Resilience is sometimes taken to mean the ability to recover efficiently from a significant disruptive incident, such as a runway closure. However, this topic has been considered elsewhere and is not the subject of this request for information.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.caa.co.uk/Consumers/Guide-to-aviation/Demand-for-additional-runway-capacity/>

- 1.6 Throughout Europe there is a move to simplify and harmonise the way airspace and air traffic control is used through the Single European Sky project. In the UK and Ireland we're meeting those and other issues through the Future Airspace Strategy (FAS) which sets out a plan to modernise airspace. FAS is a collaborative initiative between a range of stakeholders which sets the direction for modernisation, but does not include details or recommendations about specific structures or flightpaths. For more information see [www.caa.co.uk/fas](http://www.caa.co.uk/fas).
- 1.7 In the CAA's Strategic Plan for 2016-2021, we committed to thinking creatively about how existing capacity can be planned and operated to meet stakeholders' expectations, and what the CAA can do to ensure this issue is addressed.
- 1.8 We wish to explore two key areas from a UK perspective, recognising that the issues are likely to be more severe in the South East of England.
- How can the performance of the aviation network be improved or optimised?
  - How effective is the current regime, and how are consumer interests represented?
- 1.9 For each of these areas, we will engage with relevant government departments, and organisations, including airports, airlines, ACL<sup>3</sup> and air traffic control (ATC) providers as we develop our recommendations. We are also keen to gather evidence and suggestions from passenger groups and other industries to support and shape this work.
- 1.10 Hence this request for information, which sets out the key questions for each of the two areas above. You may wish to answer all or just some of the questions relevant to you. We would strongly encourage those making submissions to provide details of the evidence and data which support their arguments, to enable the CAA to understand more fully the basis on which conclusions have been reached.

---

<sup>3</sup> Airport Coordination Limited, the independent UK airport slot coordinator.

- 1.11 Questions 1-4 (Chapter 3) are aimed at industry parties who plan how to use the UK's aviation infrastructure and in particular how they understand and balance aviation capacity and resilience trade-offs on behalf of passengers. Questions 5-13 (Chapter 3) deal with the aviation industry decision making processes and assumptions that lead to the capacity available and the resulting airline schedules. Questions 14-18 (Chapter 4) cover the day to day operational challenges facing the aviation industry in the future, and what can be done to improve operational resilience. And finally, Questions 19-23 (Chapter 4) are concerned with sharing information, either between different industry parties, which could help to improve planning and performance, or that may be important for individual passengers when booking or during their journey.
- 1.12 We look forward to receiving submissions, and thank you in advance for your engagement.

## Responses to this document

---

- 1.13 We are inviting responses to this document by 16 September 2016 and you can [send us your comments online](#). This will enable us to analyse responses effectively, and improve how we communicate our recommendations based on the responses we receive.
- 1.14 We are willing to meet with any stakeholder organisations to discuss these issues further, and where possible we will seek to incorporate this as part of existing meetings. For further information please email [policyprogrammesteam@caa.co.uk](mailto:policyprogrammesteam@caa.co.uk) or telephone Jonathan Sharratt on 0207 453 6278.
- 1.15 Further details on responding to this document can be found in Chapter 5 including how we will handle any confidential information we might receive.

## Chapter 2

## Introduction and background

---

- 2.1 The Airports Commission forecasts that, absent any runway expansion, both Heathrow and Gatwick will be operating at their maximum capacity by 2020, with all airports in the London area reaching their maximum runway throughput by 2040<sup>4</sup>. Heathrow already operates close to its 480,000 annual air transport movement (ATM) cap<sup>5</sup> and Gatwick is the world's busiest single runway airport.
- 2.2 Airport and airspace capacity constraints in London and the South-East are already beginning to affect consumers by: restricting competition, restricting route choice, adversely affecting value through higher fares, and adversely affecting service quality as a result of decreased resilience. These impacts are expected to become more pronounced in the future as demand for aviation services increases, before any new runway capacity is opened beyond 2025.
- 2.3 Capacity constraints will increasingly shape network configuration by reinforcing the trend towards focusing on the most profitable, high-yield routes. At Heathrow this is already leading to further specialisation on long-haul routes, in particular those routes for which geography or economic, cultural and historical links give London an advantage. This trend is likely to intensify as London's other airports become more congested.
- 2.4 Gatwick has increased its annual passenger numbers by approximately 6.5 million since 2012, with European traffic a significant driver. For the summer 2016 season, Gatwick has announced a sizeable increase of 20 long haul routes from 30 to 50. This includes a range of destinations across Canada and the USA, and also Hong Kong, Peru, Cuba and Costa Rica.

---

<sup>4</sup> Airports Commission – Interim Report, December 2013; Final Report, July 2015

<sup>5</sup> A planning condition associated with the approval of Terminal 5.