

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM, Chair of the Transport Committee

Mrs Louise Ellman MP
Chair, Transport Select Committee
House of Commons
London, SW1A 0AA

London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
London, SE1 2AA

24 September 2014

Dear Mrs Ellman

London Assembly Transport Committee's submission to inquiry into smaller airports

I am writing, on behalf of the London Assembly's Transport Committee, to set out our response to the Transport Select Committee's inquiry into smaller airports.

This submission is based on our past work on aviation including our report *Airport Capacity in London* (May 2013). A full copy of our report is available online at: <http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/airport-capacity-in-london>

In our report, we stressed the role that all airports, including smaller airports, could play in meeting existing demand for air travel. We identified scope to use all London's main airports, including Heathrow, differently. Although Heathrow is running at near full runway capacity, there is unused terminal capacity which could be utilised through the use of bigger planes. There is also spare runway capacity at Gatwick, Stansted and Luton. In summer 2012, 12 per cent of Gatwick's runway slots, 47 per cent of Stansted's runway slots, and 51 per cent of Luton's runway slots were not used.

In addition to making better use of London's large airports, we noted the role played by smaller airports in and around the capital. Some airports near London are essential for meeting business demand for air travel. For example, in 2011, Farnborough and Biggin Hill airports were major operators in business aviation handling 25,000 and 11,300 air traffic movements respectively. Biggin Hill airport stressed to us its focus in catering for private business travel. We have also heard that beyond London other regional airports, such as Birmingham, have spare capacity and could help relieve the burden on Heathrow.

In our report, we showed that key to making better use of all airports, including smaller airports, is improving surface public transport access. We found that many people prefer to use Heathrow and may be reluctant to use other airports because they consider these airports difficult to reach. In light of these findings, we called on the Airports Commission to address the issue of surface public transport access in its work. We are therefore supportive of the Airports Commission's recommendation to the Government for a package of surface transport access improvements to make airports with spare capacity more attractive to airlines and passengers. Such improvements may be needed at all airports including smaller airports.

We trust that you will take our comments into account and look forward to hearing the outcomes of the inquiry in due course.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM
Chair of the Transport Committee