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## **SASIG 2011/12 Meeting Date**

The forthcoming SASIG meeting in 2011/12 will be on:

**Friday 24 February 2012**

Meetings are held between 11am and 1pm, at Local Government House, Smith Square, SW1P 3HZ, with lunch provided afterwards; a location map is at

<http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pagelid=27909>.

## **Westminster Debate**

### **Lords debate aviation**

13 October 2011

Speaking during a debate about light aviation, Earl Attlee said that local Councils were asked to consider the principles set out in national policy statements and the Government's framework for UK aviation, which was under development. He added that further protection for airfields would not therefore be needed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

He said that the current planning system had become unwieldy and complex and said the Government was committed to implementing a simpler, swifter system that everyone could understand, which adhered to national objectives of safeguarding the natural environment, combating climate change and supporting sustainable local growth.

Earl Attlee said planning decisions should support these national objectives while allowing local Councils to produce their own plans and that planning policy for airfields had not changed.

He emphasised that the local Council would need to consider the role of the airport or airfield in serving business, leisure, training and emergency service needs. Furthermore, the location of the proposed development had to be appropriate and sustainable when considered against NPPF policy and other relevant material planning considerations.

Opening the debate, Conservative peer Lord Rotherwick warned that airfields and airports were threatened by the NPPF and said that intent to protect them would be ineffective without changes to the draft framework. He said that the UK had approximately 12,000 active general aviation (GA) aircraft and that GA flights accounted for more than twice that of airline and cargo flights.

Lord Rotherwick also emphasised the economic activity associated with GA, both at local and national level, which provided thousands of jobs often in rural areas. However, he warned that airfield planning development was provided for in several documents, but the changes to the NPPF would replace this protection with only "basic principles".

He added that a paragraph intended to provide protection for small airports and airfields by considering their wider economic and business roles offered "no real protection". The solution, said Lord Rotherwick, was simple. He said that GA airfields and small airports should be afforded planning protection in the NPPF so that planning authorities would be required to consider national infrastructure when determining planning applications. He argued that this would also protect airfields in the absence of an adequate local plan.

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## **MPs debate 'High Speed 2'**

13 October 2011

Government efforts to improve rail capacity would still not be enough to meet long-term needs MPs have heard.

Transport Minister, Theresa Villiers, said that despite the biggest programme of rail capacity improvements for 100 years, more needed to be done to provide additional inter-city transport capacity and that no responsible Government could ignore this problem.

She added that the Government “fully recognised” the concerns of communities along the preferred route for a new high-speed rail line - HS2; half of the route inherited from Labour had been changed and the Minister was confident that further improvements could be made. Ms Villiers highlighted the UK's existing high-speed railway line, HS1 as an example of how high-speed rail systems could be designed in a way that minimised impacts on local communities. She said that care would be needed in phase two with the link to Heathrow.

On the issue of passenger growth, she said that forecasts would double for long-distance services on the west coast mainline over 30 years based on growth rates of about 2% a year. However, Ms Villiers suggested these numbers were “cautious” in light of a 60% growth between London to Manchester over four years to 2008. Ms Villiers defended the decision not to use the most up to date passenger demand forecasting methods, arguing that the Government's preferred method provided a more “robust analysis”.

She added that no upgrade of existing railways could deliver the capacity increases of HS2, and that a fundamental problem of the alternative schemes is that they relied on existing line upgrades, adding that work on existing lines would involve extensive disruption.

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## **MPs debate Air Passenger Duty (APD)**

20 October 2011

There are no promises that Air Passenger Duty would be cut in future, MPs have heard. Speaking in a debate about Air Passenger Duty (APD), Economic Secretary to the Treasury, Chloe Smith, said that the Government would try to deliver an APD system that is fairer, simpler and more efficient, and that the Chancellor would set details in due course.

Ms Smith said that everyone wanted aviation to succeed and that because of pressures facing consumers the Chancellor froze APD in March, as well as addressing issues of fairness by extending it to passengers aboard business jets. She acknowledged concerns about APD and its banding structure, and that people had called for cuts, but said that it was also important to cut the deficit.

On the issue of devolving APD, she said that in the short-term, the APD for long-haul passengers departing from Northern Ireland would be cut to the short-haul rate and that the Government had launched a process for devolving APD to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the longer term.

However, on APD in the regions, Ms Smith said that the APD consultation had revealed no agreement, with some regional airports asking the Government to lower APD rates for the regions, but others asking the opposite.

In terms of the environmental impact of aviation, Ms Smith said that an international response was required to aviation, which is why the Government supported the inclusion of aviation in the EU emissions trading scheme (ETS) from 2012. Despite calls for the abolition of APD once aviation entered the emissions trading scheme, she said that APD was fundamentally a revenue-raising duty and currently raised around £2.5 billion a year.

She said the forecast revenues that would result from aviation joining the ETS were only around £0.1 billion a year, and she said this reflected the fact that under the relevant EU Directive most of the allowances for the system would be given to airlines for free.

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## **Central Government and Agencies**

### **Defra - £2 million boost to tackle air pollution**

28 October 2011

The fight against air pollution and the serious health problems it causes has been given a major boost after an extra £2 million to help Councils reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) emissions was announced by Environment Minister, Lord Taylor of Holbeach.

51 Councils across England will receive funding for a range of projects designed to reduce serious levels of air pollution in our towns and cities. Bids have been submitted for the following range of projects, such as looking at introducing low emission zones, which have been successful in London, and launching public information campaigns to raise awareness of air pollution. The largest grant of £190,000 will be given to Stockport and Greater Manchester Metropolitan Borough Council to undertake research on the impact that traffic control and low emission vehicles have on NO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

The Government hopes that these projects will lead to significant reductions in NO<sub>2</sub> emissions over the next twelve months in those areas where urgent change is required. Local Authorities who received grant funding will be required to provide the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) with a progress report by September next year to monitor the success of each project and how the money is being spent.

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### **Transport Secretary speech at Airport Operators Association (AOA) conference**

31 October 2011

Two weeks' after taking up the post of Transport Secretary, Justine Greening addressed the Airport Operator's Association (AOA) Conference. Ms Greening indicated that she intends to get out and about to speak to parties in her new role, and expressed her pleasure at addressing an aviation audience with her first keynote conference speech – an audience with whom the Minister had worked during her time as Economic Secretary to the Treasury.

Ms Greening recognised the aviation sector's contribution to UK plc. – the range of aviation companies; jobs created and supported; giving British business a gateway to the global marketplace; and the taxes the sector pays to the public purse. The Minister added that aviation has a central role in helping to deliver the key economic objectives for a recovery from these tough economic times.

Ms Greening accepted that many in the audience had criticised the Government for their decision to not pursue a proposed third runway at Heathrow. However, she sought to draw a line under that issue by reiterating that the political decision has been made and will not be altered.

Looking at writing a new chapter in aviation policy, Ms Greening set out that this Government's aviation strategy will be broad-based, looking at the capacity question; the short-term and the long-term; the economic and the environmental; the local and the global; the needs of the sector; and the needs of the passenger.

Work is already underway to address the passenger experience – including new consumer protection rules, alongside legislation to improve the economic regulation of the sector, and a new security regime. The South East Airports Taskforce (SEAT) is working to reduce queues at border checks, whilst maintaining the highest levels of security; and trials of operational freedoms are underway at Heathrow with the intention of improving resilience - reducing the number of late departures, particularly unscheduled night flights, allowing for more effective recovery on days when poor weather, or other problems, disrupt flights and delay passengers.

Looking more long-term, the Secretary of State set out that she wishes to see an aviation sector that can grow and help our economy grow too, whilst addressing the sector's local and global environmental impacts. Ms Greening indicated this means all sectors acting together, with no more being expected of one sector than any other.

The Government's approach to developing a new aviation framework illustrates their willingness to receive expert input, recognising that the Government does not claim to have all the answers, and is predicated on the polarised opinions that have dominated the discussion in the past being left behind.

Ms Greening explained that she expects all sides to be fully engaged and properly involved, to assist her productively – not just as another talking shop. She promoted regular, structured engagement, throughout the year, as she looks forward to working incredibly closely with the sector in the months and years to come.

Full text of the speech is at: <http://www.dft.gov.uk/news/speeches/greening-20111031>  
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### **Shadow Transport Secretary speech at Airport Operators Association (AOA) conference** 31 October 2011

In her speech at the Airport Operator's Association (AOA) conference, Maria Eagle, Shadow Transport Secretary, stated her belief that "...the UK's airports are central to our economic prosperity and could be key drivers of the growth without which we have no prospect of emerging from the dangerous economic situation we are in."

Ms Eagle apologised for Labour's mistake of seeing the Department for Transport (DfT) as a revolving door Department; adding that she is sorry the Government has not learnt from Labour's mistake - this approach does not supply good governance, and it is bad for an industry that needs a long-term consistent vision from the Government.

Ms Eagle explained she has been criticised for refusing to oppose all of the spending reductions that the DfT has pursued. She backed the decision to cut nearly £2bn from the road-building programme, as well as the £1bn reduction in the cost of Crossrail. In addition, Ms Eagle has supported the scrapping of public bodies, even those that were successful, and the significant cuts in staff and running costs of the DfT.

Ms Eagle did not, however, support the speed and depth of the cuts being imposed; this, in conjunction with the lack of a credible aviation strategy, were the reasons that Government has failed to move away from the economic jeopardy the country is experiencing.

### **All-party aviation policy**

Labour is half-way through their two-year aviation policy review, meaning that at this point the Party does not have a fully formed set of policies, Ms Eagle explained. Such policy, would, however, not apply a single policy to an entire region - "Any serious strategy for aviation and its crucial role in the UK economy cannot start from a position that rules out additional capacity in the South East."

Ms Eagle proposed that the politics be taken out of aviation, that Party differences be put aside – her offer to Government was that they work together to produce a joint aviation policy, for the good of the nation. "...in addition to the more immediate work that the Government must conclude, let's establish a cross-Party commission to set our long-term aviation strategy for a generation and more, not a Parliament."

Ms Eagle felt this would require all Parties to set aside firmly held views and entrenched positions, accept where they have got things wrong, and not partake of Party-political wrangling. Whatever the outcome of the next election, the joint strategy would have to be upheld; and that strategy would not fall back on the proposed third runway at Heathrow - the local environmental impact means that is off the agenda.

### **High-speed rail**

On the issue of high-speed rail, Ms Eagle supported a direct connection to Heathrow being part of the first phase of construction, as she believes this would:

- remove the need to build an expensive spur later;
- open up the prospect of private sector funding, potentially saving taxpayers money;
- make better use of existing transport corridors;
- avoid an area of outstanding natural beauty; and
- open up the opportunity to connect to the Great Western mainline, bringing the benefits of the high-speed line to the South West and Wales.

### **Emissions**

Ms Eagle then turned to the need for the industry to reduce its contribution to climate change, citing the progress being made through air traffic management and new aircraft technology as successes to date.

However, Ms Eagle set out that not only should international aviation be included in UK Carbon Budgets, as per the Committee on Climate Change's advice, but that the target to reduce aviation emissions in the UK to below 2005 levels by 2050 is insufficient to avert the worst effects of climate change. Thus, a new target must be agreed in which the aviation industry goes further in order to relieve the burden on other sectors, to ensure the UK can achieve the wider goal set out in the climate Change Act of an 80% reduction in emissions (from 1990 levels) by 2050.

The full text of Ms Eagle's speech is available at: <http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/?p=4659>  
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## **Fringe Events at Conservative Party Conference**

### **'Fair Tax On Flying: are flight taxes grounding business and travellers?'**

2 October 2011

Aviation taxes were bad for the tourism industry and were stopping ordinary people from travelling, Conservative MP, Paul Maynard (Blackpool North and Cleveleys), said at a Fringe event during the Conservative Party Conference. Without a change to Air Passenger Duty (APD), he said that the Government would not meet its tourism goals. A more fundamental question was the wider strategy for aviation. If the intention was for more people to fly, he said, then more capacity would need to be created.

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### **'Towards a New Aviation Policy: should airports and aviation be allowed to grow?'**

3 October 2011

An incremental approach to aviation policy and infrastructure leads to "a series of cul-de-sacs" Transport for London Deputy Chairman, Cllr Daniel Moylan, has said. Ideas of meeting airport infrastructure demand through using high-speed rail connections between regional airports and attempting to increase capacity of regional airports would not work, he asserted.

Speaking at the Transport Hub's 'Towards a New Aviation Policy: should airports and aviation be allowed to grow?', Cllr Moylan was joined by Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA) Head of Public Affairs, Luke Pollard; British Chamber of Commerce Director of Policy and External Affairs, Adam Marshall; Airport Operators Association Chairman, Ed Anderson; Aviation Environment Federation representative, Jeff Gazzard; and Lionel Zetter, who Chaired the event.

Cllr Moylan began by warning that London airports were now full. He said it was "palpably" the case that something needed to be done for London air transport urgently and that it was for the Government to do it. He warned that Government estimates that airports would be full by 2030 were optimistic.

On the need for a major hub airport, he said Britain could not be competing with Frankfurt and others without it, and that Heathrow was groaning at the seams. He said there was no other airport in the world where the challenge was 100% capacity every day. He said this illustrated the need for another hub airport if we are to remain part of the international connectivity between world cities - not only is this urgent, it is important for the economy as well.

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## **'Delivering low carbon transport'**

4 October 2011

The Olympics will help make the case for cutting unnecessary travel, Transport Minister Theresa Villiers, has said. She explained that it was important to look afresh at people's lifestyles in order to cut down on unnecessary travel, and that this agenda would receive a boost from the Olympics.

Ms Villiers said it was important to persuade people to change their travel routines during the Olympics or parts of London would "grind to a halt". She said it was important to make the case for more walking and cycling and that lessons learned from this process would lead to a push for different methods of travel.

She added she was a "huge fan" of cycling and had huge respect for boosting cycling numbers in London. Ms Villiers added that the Government continued to support cycling where possible through the Bikeability scheme and the sustainable transport fund. However, she admitted that in difficult financial times this had had an impact on the ability of the Government to fund programmes, but cited the railway investment as a demonstration of their commitment to improving transport infrastructure.

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## **'Building a sustainable future for transport'**

4 October 2011

Stephen Hammond, Conservative MP for Wimbledon, and Personal Private Secretary (PPS) to Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, spoke at an event titled 'Building a sustainable future for transport' hosted by GoAhead and Siemens.

Mr Hammond wanted to reframe the debate on sustainability to not focus simply on environmental sustainability but also discuss the social and economic sustainability. Technology to reduce emissions will have a large impact on the transport industry, he said. The Government must address the question of where the funding will come from. There is a balance to be decided between the tax-payer and the ticket purchasers, Mr Hammond explained. Mr Hammond spoke of the need to hand the power to local communities to make their own transport decisions but that local communities needed funding in order to implement their ideas.

Responding to a question from London First on the need to include aviation in the debate on sustainable transport, air traffic will have to be directed away from Heathrow, Mr Hammond said. High-speed rail is part of the solution. Mr Hammond suggested the Government would look at plans for a new airport in the southeast or new runway at Gatwick. In reply to a question on the affordability of a new high-speed rail line (HS2), Mr Hammond suggested complaints about HS2 were based on assertion rather than analysis; those in opposition to it are understating the economic benefits of high-speed rail.

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## Westminster Committees

### Energy and Climate Change Committee hears about the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)

11 October 2011

During an Energy and Climate Change Committee session on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), MPs heard from the following witnesses:

- Trevor Sikorski, Barclay's Capital;
- Miles Austin, Carbon Market Investors Association; and
- Imtiaz Ahmad, International Emissions Trading Association.

Conservative Chair of the Committee, Tim Yeo MP (Con; South Suffolk), began by asking **how effective the ETS was likely to be**. Imtiaz Ahmad replied that from the International Emissions Trading Association's point of view the ETS contained the right principle and was likely to be effective. Miles Austin warned that there was a false idea that international offsets could cover a large amount of the EU ETS after 2020. However, an objective approach showed that offsets would only be able to cover around half of what was needed, he argued. Mr Austin also argued that it might be economically viable for the EU to target 30% reductions, rather than 20% reductions by 2020.

John Robertson MP (Lab; Glasgow North West) asked the witnesses **which countries would be suitable to share the EU ETS in a wider ETS scheme**. Mr Ahmad stated that he hoped there could be links with similar schemes in Brazil and China. He added that the scheme going on in California may also be suitable for a European link. There was a chance for the EU to continue to take a leadership role with regard to emissions trading globally, Mr Ahmad commented.

During an Energy and Climate Change Committee session on the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), MPs heard from the following witnesses:

- Damian Ryan, The Climate Group;
- Dr Andre Stochniol, Catholic Overseas Development Agency (CAFOD);
- Mark Brownrigg, UK Chamber of Shipping; and
- Professor Joanne Scott, University College London

The Chair of the Committee, Tim Yeo MP (Con; South Suffolk), began by asking **whether it was disappointing that aviation had not been optioned under the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) from the beginning of the scheme**.

Damian Ryan responded that from an environmental perspective this was indeed a disappointment. However, he added, from a political perspective it was clear why it was not possible. In the long-term the goal was to have 100% auctioning of aviation emissions, he stated.

The Chair asked **if the EU did not act, was there any likelihood the aviation industry would change behaviour without regulation**. Mr Ryan stated that it was vital the EU acted and the ETS was an important measure. However, the nature of the high price of jet fuel had always meant the airline industry was constantly striving for efficiency to increase profits, he added. The witness also stressed that it was difficult to switch to non-fossil fuels for aircraft due to the large amount of energy necessary for a plane to take off.

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## **Transport Committee hears from Justine Greening on the work of the Department for Transport (DfT)\***

19 October 2011

The House of Commons Transport Select Committee has taken evidence on the work of the Department for Transport (DfT) from Rt Hon Justine Greening MP, Secretary of State for Transport, and Lin Homer, Permanent Secretary, Department for Transport.

The new Transport Secretary, Justine Greening (Conservative MP for Putney), has told the Commons Transport Committee that making public transport affordable is a priority.

Ms Greening was questioned on her previous statements about the possibility of a third runway at Heathrow Airport as well as the overall DfT plans for aviation expansion and plans to look at aviation strategy in conjunction with other major transport projects.

In response, Ms Greening acknowledged that she had previously stated a third runway at Heathrow was a bad idea. She also stated that key components of the Government's plans for a new high-speed railway line, 'high-speed 2' / 'HS2', were modal shift and rail reform, and it was right that any decision taken on HS2 was taken at a high strategic level. She explained that the previous Transport Secretary had been careful to ensure the policy sequence made sense, and that she was convinced this had been realised. Transport interconnectivity was important, she stressed, adding that the Government was aware of the need to make overarching, strategic decisions.

\* This report has been produced from the uncorrected transcript of the Committee session. As such neither witnesses nor Members have had the opportunity to correct the record. This report must therefore be read in the knowledge that the transcript is not yet an approved formal record of the proceedings.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmtran/uc1560-i/uc156001.htm>  
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## **House of Commons Questions**

### **Goldsmith, Z. – Consultation from BAA Ltd about operational freedoms trials**

3 October 2011

**Zac Goldsmith (Con; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 14 July 2011, on the South East Airports Taskforce, what recent discussions he has had with BAA on its consultation plans with relevant local authorities, communities and other stakeholders throughout the process.

**Theresa Villiers (Aviation Minister):** The Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), has not had discussions with BAA on its consultation plans with relevant local authorities, communities and other stakeholders. I have discussed BAA's plans for engagement with local communities and stakeholders with them as part of the work of the South East Airports Taskforce and related meetings. I have asked the UK's independent aviation regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) to supervise the trial of operational freedoms at Heathrow and to report regularly on progress.

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## **Goldsmith, Z. – Defining trigger points and caps for operational freedoms trials**

3 October 2011

**Zac Goldsmith (Con; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport pursuant to the written ministerial statement of 14 July 2011, on the South East Airports Taskforce, (1) when he plans to define the trigger mechanisms for the deployment of operational freedoms at Heathrow Airport;

(2) when he plans to define the safeguards to apply in relation to the deployment of operational freedoms at Heathrow Airport;

(3) what definition of particular disruption his Department uses;

(4) what his policy is on a cap on the number of operational freedom days at Heathrow Airport.

**Theresa Villiers (Aviation Minister):** The trial of operational freedoms at Heathrow, which I announced on 14 July 2011, is currently being designed by the airport operator, BAA, under the supervision of the Civil Aviation Authority. BAA will engage with relevant local authorities, communities and stakeholders on the details of the trial once this process is complete. The results of the trial will help define the circumstances in which the measures are deployed, including the requirement for safeguards and restrictions if the regime were to proceed beyond the trial stage to be adopted on a long-term basis. The results will also form the basis for a consultation with local communities which will in due course inform the Government in deciding whether an operational freedoms regime should be adopted at the airport.

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## **Poulter, D. - Inclusion of aviation in the EU Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS)**

3 October 2011

**Daniel Poulter (Con; Central Suffolk and North Ipswich):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what estimate his Department has made of the potential additional costs to passengers of the inclusion of aviation in the EU Emissions Trading System.

**Theresa Villiers (Aviation Minister):** The impact assessment for 'The Aviation Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme Regulations 2010' estimated that the inclusion of aviation in the EU ETS will increase average UK air fares by approximately 6% to 7% in the period between 2012 and 2020. This analysis is based on the assumption that airlines will pass on the additional costs of emissions trading to passengers. However, it was noted that there is significant uncertainty over the precise impact on all types of air fares.

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## **Kwarteng, K. - Aviation regulation**

3 October 2011

**Kwasi Kwarteng (Con; Spelthorne):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent discussions he has had on improving the regulation of aviation.

**Theresa Villiers (Aviation Minister):** The Government are currently undertaking a review of the existing stock of regulation with a view to removing over-burdensome regulatory legislation. As part of this process, next year the public and businesses will be invited to put forward ideas for regulations in the aviation sector that might be amended or revoked so as to reduce their burden on the industry or to the public.

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**Goldsmith, Z. – Direct link from Heathrow Airport to new high-speed railway line ('HS2')**  
3 October 2011

**Zac Goldsmith (Con; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what his policy is on a direct link to Heathrow airport as part of the proposed High Speed 2 scheme.

**Philip Hammond (Transport Secretary):** The Government published High Speed Rail: Investing in Britain's Future? in February 2011. That set out proposals for a high-speed rail network in a Y shape from London to Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester with a direct connection to Heathrow airport and a link to HS1. The Government believes that there is strong strategic case for such a network as it would boost economic growth, spread prosperity and provide an attractive alternative to domestic aviation. Following the end of consultation on 29 July, we are considering the responses to consultation and expect to announce a decision on the way forward later in the year.

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**Goldsmith, Z. – Retention of cap on aircraft movements at Heathrow Airport**  
3 October 2011

**Zac Goldsmith (Con; Richmond Park):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what plans he has for the future of the annual air traffic movements limit at Heathrow Airport.

**Theresa Villiers (Aviation Minister):** The current 480,000 air transport movement cap was set as a condition of the Terminal 5 planning consent in 2001. To change or remove the cap would require a planning application. The Government recently confirmed their intention to retain the cap in the context of their announcement on the conclusions of the South East Airports Taskforce.

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**Edwards, J. – Implications for Wales of a railway hub at Heathrow Airport**  
12 October 2011

**Jonathan Edwards (Plaid Cymru; Carmarthen East and Dinefwr):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport (1) what recent discussions he has had with Network Rail regarding a railway transport hub at Heathrow airport;  
(2) when he plans to make an announcement of the outcomes of discussions on a transport connection between Heathrow airport, the proposed High Speed Rail 2 and the Great Western Mainline;  
(3) what assessment he has made of the effects on the economy of an improved rail connection between south Wales and Heathrow airport;  
(4) what estimate he has made of the change in average travel time between south Wales and Heathrow airport which would result from a railway transport hub at Heathrow airport;  
(5) what discussions he has had with the owners of Cardiff airport about the likely effects of a railway transport hub at Heathrow airport;  
(6) what recent estimate he has made of the cost of creating a railway transport hub at Heathrow airport.

**Theresa Villiers M (Transport Minister):** Following publication by Network Rail of its London and South East Route Utilisation Strategy in July 2011, the Secretary of State for Transport, my right hon. Friend the Member for Runnymede and Weybridge (Mr Hammond), and officials from the Department for Transport have, separately, had discussions with Network Rail and BAA regarding taking forward the recommendations in the strategy for improvements in rail access to Heathrow airport. Network Rail is now progressing further work to determine in more detail the case for a rail connection from the Great Western Main Line to Heathrow airport including an assessment of costs and the economic benefits arising from the effect on travel times. No wider stakeholder consultation has yet been undertaken. The Department for Transport expects to make a further announcement in due course.

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### **Ellman, L. - Gatwick Airport Station**

18 October 2011

**Louise Ellman (Lab/Co-op; Liverpool Riverside):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport for what reasons she has rejected the request from Southern Railways to vary its franchise so that it is not obliged to install gates at Gatwick Airport Station; and if she will make a statement.

**Norman Baker MP (Transport Minister):** I have concluded that the proposal is not sensible for the Department as it does not support either the general principle of Sir Roy McNulty's review in getting cost out of the industry nor the specific finding on the introduction of gating and realising the potential of GB Rail. The proposal is also contrary to the simplification of fares and could inhibit opportunities for Smartcard ticketing.

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### **Robertson, A. - Edinburgh Airport**

19 October 2011

**Angus Robertson (Scottish National Party (SNP); Moray):** We learnt today that the British Airports Authority is to sell Edinburgh airport. Does the Prime Minister agree that it is important for the Scottish economy that we have as many direct international routes and services as possible? If so, why does he not listen to the views of the four major airports and Transport Scotland, which want air passenger duty to be devolved?

**David Cameron (Prime Minister):** I think the most important thing is that investment goes into the infrastructure of our airports, and I know from first hand that Edinburgh airport has superb facilities which continue to be improved. As for air passenger duty, we will continue to listen carefully to those arguments.

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## **Goggins, P. – Aviation and the Northern Ireland economy**

19 October 2011

**Paul Goggins (Lab; Wythenshawe and Sale East):** What recent discussions he has had with the Northern Ireland Executive on the contribution of aviation to economic development.

**Hugo Swire (Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office):** I am in regular contact with Executive Ministers about air routes and fully understand the importance of the aviation industry to Northern Ireland, one of whose main companies, Bombardier Aerospace, I shall be seeing again shortly.

**Paul Goggins:** May I also welcome the Government's decision to reduce air passenger duty on long-haul flights? This creates a new anomaly, of course, whereby if someone pays tax on a return flight from Belfast to New York they will pay less tax than they would on a return flight to Manchester. Given the importance of regional routes to the Northern Ireland economy, will the Minister press the Chancellor, who is sitting very close to him, for a lower rate of duty on flights between Belfast and regional airports in the UK?

**Hugo Swire:** We have been pressing the Chancellor on quite a lot of things recently and I am not sure we want to press him much more. As the right hon. Gentleman knows, Northern Ireland shares a land border and the flights from Dublin were cheaper - that was the problem. We are most grateful to the Treasury for recognising the anomaly of the transatlantic Belfast route, and any other airlines that are listening in might wish to take advantage of that, because we want to grow air traffic to Northern Ireland as part of rebalancing the economy.

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## **Hilling, J. – Future connections between new high-speed rail and the North West**

19 October 2011

**Julie Hilling (Lab; Bolton West):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport whether she has plans for future high-speed rail stations at (a) Manchester airport and (b) other sites in the north-west.

**Justine Greening (Transport Minister)** [holding answer 6 September 2011]: HS2 Ltd is currently preparing detailed advice on route and station options for the north-west. This element of the company's remit also instructs it to provide advice on serving major airports in the regions that would be served by HS2.

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## **Chishti, R. - Thames Estuary Airport**

26 October 2011

**Rehman Chishti (Con; Gillingham and Rainham):** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport what recent assessment she has made of the feasibility of establishing an airport in the Thames Estuary.

**Theresa Villiers (Transport Minister):** The Department for Transport has not made any recent assessment of the merits of a new airport in the Thames estuary. The Government are developing a new policy framework for aviation which supports economic growth while addressing the environmental impacts of flying. We will consider all responses to the scoping exercise which has recently closed on this issue.

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## **House of Lords Questions**

### **Air Passenger Duty (APD) - legal restrictions**

18 October 2011

**Lord Newby (Lib Dem):** To ask Her Majesty's Government whether restrictions exist within (a) United Kingdom, and (b) international, law to prevent the banding for air passenger duty being changed from one which is based on taxing passengers to one that taxes planes.

**Lord Sassoon (Commercial Secretary to the Treasury):** Aviation is a global industry bound by international agreements. The UK is a signatory to the 1944 ICAO Chicago Convention and has air service agreements with over 150 countries. Many stakeholders have expressed concerns about the legality and feasibility of introducing a per plane duty under current international rules. The Government wish to proceed with consensus in this area and will not introduce a per plane duty in place of air passenger duty at the present time. However, we will continue working with our international partners to build understanding and support for this approach in the future.

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