

The Heathrow Area Transport Forum – Chair’s Annual Report

July 2020

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My first meeting in post as the Chair of the HATF took place in July 2019 and this report is my first opportunity to give an account of our work. I would like to place on record my thanks to board members for their support, insight, and contributions in helping shape the future of surface transport access to Heathrow. Beyond the board, I am also grateful to the many wider HATF members who have attended and contributed their time and expertise to the special interest groups and forum meetings. I am also grateful for the resources provided to me by Heathrow that have allowed HATF’s work to be conducted so efficiently, and the collegial approach taken by Tony Caccavone and his Surface Access team at Heathrow Airport Ltd. My thanks also go to Andrew Tucker who provided independent technical support from Atkins, during this period.

HATF’s work over the last 12 months has encompassed a wide range of activities and topics, although the focus of HATF’s work has shifted during this period. While much of the work undertaken by HATF during 2019 and early 2020 was focussed on helping challenge, shape and refine Heathrow’s proposed surface access strategies around their airport expansion plans, more recent focus has been helping to shape the surface access requirements in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and a continuing 2 runway airport.

HATF’s work has been delivered across a range of different meetings, forums and events. In all cases, HATF has sought to obtain the views and expertise across a wide range of organisations and present clear recommendations to HAL on how best to improve the sustainability and accessibility of the airport. One special aspect of the value HATF can add to Heathrow’s plans is the bringing together of varied perspectives on surface transport issues. HATF unites transport professionals, trade unions, local councils, representatives of business, the aviation industry, freight, public transport operators, strategic infrastructure providers, community interests and passenger consumer expertise. The board and the forum also draw strength from the mixing of London, south-eastern and national perspectives amongst its expert member organisations.

The main mechanisms by which HATF has facilitated this engagement have included;

- **Board meetings**
- **Special Interest Groups**
- **Wider forum events**
- **One to one meetings**
- **Focussed Engagement with member organisations**

- **Independent technical support**

Developing a surface access strategy for a three-runway airport

Prior to the Court of Appeal's ruling on the Government's aviation strategy in February 2020, HAL had been preparing to submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Planning Inspectorate in late 2020 to provide for a third runway at the airport. As such during 2019 and early 2020 HATF spent a great deal of time reviewing, discussing and scrutinising the emerging details of the proposed expansion, particularly in relation to the surface access strategy. Key areas where HATF were challenging HAL to further refine and develop these proposals included;

- **The ambition of HAL's surface access strategy.** Much of HATF's work around the third runway proposals focussed on reviewing HAL's proposed strategy and considering how it could best meet or even exceed the planning conditions relating to modal share, air quality and 'no more traffic pledges'. The HATF board discussed with HAL many specific elements of the surface access strategy including those proposals related to buses, air quality, vehicle access charging, construction strategy, demand management and passenger information, active transport, disability access and sustainable transport. Across these areas, HATF provided HAL with expert advice and feedback on how the surface access strategy could be refined and improved to best meet the needs of airport passengers, workers as well as those in the local communities. A wider all-day forum event organised in October 2019 also canvassed the views of the HATF wider membership on key elements of the expansion proposals. In early 2020 the HATF board summarised much of their thinking in a policy paper providing some key recommendations to HAL around the refining some elements of the third runway surface access strategy.
- **The quality and robustness of the modelling and forecasting tools.** To support the development of a third runway surface access strategy HAL developed a complex range of traffic modelling and forecasting tools to assess the impacts of different proposals on the local transport network. Given the importance of these tools tool in ensuring the development of a robust strategy that would meet the policy requirements, HATF constituted a special interest modelling group containing expertise from Transport for London, Highways England, local authorities, Network Rail, the Freight industry and HAL. This modelling subgroup debated with and advised HAL on various technical aspects of the modelling suite to help ensure that models would be able to forecast the impact of an expanded airport on the local transport network as accurately as possible. The subgroup provided HAL with a number of specific critiques and recommendations around the methodology, assumptions and application of these modelling tools.

- **Monitoring and Enforcement.** HATF spent a great deal of time discussing the proposed approach to independently monitoring and enforcing the surface access requirements of the DCO on areas such as the no more traffic pledge, air quality commitments, and mode share targets for passengers and employees. These discussions were undertaken in conjunction with HSPG and HCEB and resulted in some specific proposals presented back to HAL.
- **Funding.** The HATF board have investigated the different funding mechanisms available for delivering surface access improvements and discussed with HAL their proposed 5-year business plans in relation to this. As Chair, I have also had discussions with the Department for Transport and the Civil Aviation Authority with regards how the Airport is able to secure funding for surface access schemes such as Western and Southern Rail, as well as how best to use any revenue raised the proposed Heathrow ultra-low emissions zone and vehicle access charge.
- **Heathrow West.** As HATF Chair I have met with the promoters of the Heathrow West scheme to further understand their proposals for a new terminal under an expanded airport, particularly relating to their surface access proposals.

Improving rail connectivity to Heathrow

Regardless as to whether the airport is expanded, the HATF Board strongly support the development of improved rail links to the Heathrow and believes that their business cases are valid in a continuing 2 runway scenario. This has been a key and consistent area of interest across all Board meetings. HATF has actively engaged in lobbying HAL, Government, the Department for Transport and Network Rail to expedite delivery of both the Western Rail and Southern Access schemes – schemes that have the potential to transform access to the airport from areas currently poorly served by public transport.

On behalf of the board, I have exchanged several letters with the Government arguing the vital importance of these rail links to both the airport and the wider community.

To help other organisations undertake their own lobbying as effectively as possible, HATF prepared an information pack on the Western Rail and Southern Access schemes containing helpful background information about the history and status of these schemes.

With membership of the HATF board including representatives from Network Rail, the HATF Board have been able to gain first-hand information on the status of these schemes and the outstanding challenges and issues, particularly around funding, that still needs to be resolved. As such this topic is likely to remain a key part of HATF's agenda over the next year.

HATF have additionally lobbied for the Piccadilly Line re-signalling project to gain committed funding as which would increase the number of Piccadilly Line services to the airport. HATF also supports HS2 and the development of a high-quality interchange at Old Oak Common to allow improved access to Heathrow from many parts of the Midlands and Northern England.



Improving active travel to Heathrow

The HATF Board are unanimous that a major weakness of the existing airport is the poor quality of the existing facilities and infrastructure that support active travel to and around the airport. This manifests itself in the relatively low proportion of employees who use active travel modes to access the airport despite living only a short distance away.

Regardless as to whether the airport is expanded, a key priority identified by HATF is therefore the urgent development of a significantly improved active travel network to better link Heathrow to its local communities, and which can provide both cyclists and pedestrians with quick, easy, safe and pleasant access to and around the airport.

To help advise how best to undertake such improvements, in January 2020 HATF organised a day-long workshop event specifically focussed on the issues around active travel.

Invitations were sent to a wide range of stakeholders including the wider HATF membership, and sessions facilitated by the London Cycle Campaign, who had undertaken a high-level review of the current facilities and identified some key challenges and opportunities. Speakers from local authorities, the Colne Valley Regional Park, and Dr Will Norman the Mayor of London's walking and cycling commissioner all provided useful insights and viewpoints. The outcome of this workshop was set of recommended actions and proposals for HAL to include within their future surface access strategy.

Developing a surface access strategy for a two-runway airport

Since the pause to the development of the third runway scheme in February 2020, HATF has been focussed on developing surface access strategy that can sustainably meet the long term needs of a two-runway airport. To undertake this work HATF constituted a sub-group to the main board to consider in further detail the challenges and opportunities specific to a two-runway airport. The conclusions of this group were presented to HAL in the form of a HATF strategy paper which provided advice to HAL across a number of areas. These included:

- The recommendation that the development of a two-runway surface access strategy includes many of the policies and proposals proposed for a three-runway airport. In particular, HATF recommended that a two-runway surface access strategy is based around a similar ambition to dramatically increase the use of sustainable travel to the airport, providing a reduction in vehicle traffic and improvements in air quality and greenhouse gas emissions.
- The recommendation that the development and delivery of a two-runway strategy takes includes a greater element of partnership working between HAL and local stakeholders, such that key infrastructure improvements that benefit both the airport, local communities, and the subregion can be more effectively jointly developed and funded across different organisations.



Managing the impact of Covid-19

The impact of Covid-19 has clearly had a very profound impact across the operation of the airport and wider aviation industry, for which the long-term consequences are still very uncertain. In the short term, the HATF board have been working closely with HAL help ensure passengers and workers can continue to access the airport safely, although it is recognised that one of the many impacts of Covid-19 has been a significant reduction in the proportion of passengers and employees accessing the airport by public transport.

As such HATF Board members have been actively sharing with HAL Covid management and recovery plans across different industries, including TfL and Network Rail and liaising with the Heathrow Local Recovery Forum and sharing advice from another of our key member organisation 'Transport Focus'.