



HEATHROW AREA
TRANSPORT FORUM

October 2022

Heathrow Area Transport Forum – Chair’s Annual Report for 2021/22

I have now completed my third year in post as independent chair of the Heathrow Area Transport Forum. The focus for the past twelve months has been on continuing to support the renewal of sustainable growth at the airport, alongside informing the development of the airport’s new surface access strategy and their regulatory financial settlement for the ‘H7’ period (2022-2026).

I’m pleased to say that the Forum has continued to secure high level support from both the Heathrow team and all of our board members throughout this period.

Through our board, wider forum events and special interest groups (the majority of which have continued to be held virtually) we have covered a huge amount of ground across the last twelve months.

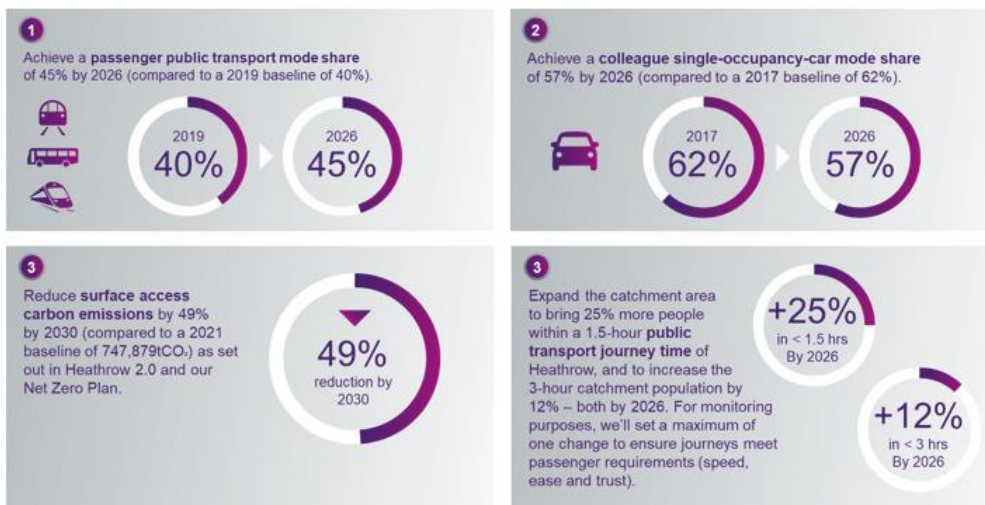
Highlights over this last year include:

Publishing of a Two-runway Surface Access Strategy

The airport published their new [surface access strategy](#) in summer 2022 after a long period of development across the last two years, which the board have been closely engaged with throughout.

The strategy sets out a range of targets for increasing the proportion of people accessing the airport by sustainable modes. These are projected to deliver a sizeable reduction of carbon emissions and so form a key deliverable as set out in the new Heathrow 2.0 and Net Zero strategies (which were also subject to discussion at board and released this year).

Heathrow's SAS: Surface Access Targets



These targets are in line with that required of the airport under the expansion scenario set out in the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS). It is to the airport's credit that they have continued to be bound by these aspirations - given the challenging two years they have had, and considering that they are under no obligation to do so in a non-expansion scenario.

This is a fast moving policy area however, and the board highlighted that these targets are not necessarily consistent with the decarbonisation aspirations of the Mayor of London as recently set out in his [2030 Net Zero Pathways report](#). As a consequence, we agreed that the targets would be kept under review by the board over the coming years.

In terms of projects to help achieve these outcomes, the strategy embraces a wide range of interventions to help support more passengers and airport employees access the site by active and sustainable travel modes. Full details are in the document, but I was particularly keen to see the introduction of a Terminal Drop Off Charge in Autumn 2021 to help influence 'kiss and fly' mode share. These modes, often necessitating four car trips to the airport for one passenger are the ones that cause particular problems in terms of emissions and congestion. The cost of the drop off charge is undeniably modest (£5) at the moment and so the effect is limited, however now the concept has been put into operation there will be opportunities to explore how to use this to help shift passengers towards public transport use, improving local air quality which remains a concern.

Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) consultation

In summer 2022 the Mayor announced his intention to expand the ULEZ from its existing boundary at the inner ring road to cover the vast majority of greater London. This would have the effect of putting in place a cordon around the airport, separating it from areas of high concentration of workers just outside of the GLA area – notably Slough and parts of Spelthorne. The Mayor has indicated that a scrappage scheme, similar to that put in place after the last extension of the zone, would also be available to Londoners. However, there was no commitment to extend this to people outside of the capital and this might lead to lower income workers with little recourse to public

transport being particularly badly impacted. This was a big concern for the board and we made extensive representations on this point to TfL in our response, whilst being supportive overall of what an extended ULEZ was trying to achieve in terms of improved air quality.

TfL also indicated an interest in exploring a wider road user charging scheme for the capital. Whilst details on this are currently limited, HATF made similar comments as we did about the proposed Boundary Charge floated in 2021 - namely that any scheme proposition needed to be developed carefully to avoid difficult London boundary issues.

Sustainable Travel Zone

Much of Heathrow's support for public transport services around the airport was suspended following the onset of the pandemic, including the Free Travel Zone around the airport campus itself. With the return of passengers throughout 2021 and 2022, and following a period of scheme design heavily informed by the board, the 'Sustainable Travel Zone' was formally launched as a replacement for those packages in 2022.

In practice this has meant a more targeted use of funding to support sustainable access to the airport than was previously the case with the free travel zone. Interventions have included the expansion of bus services into the early morning and night-time to better support shift patterns, and the inclusion of Hatton Cross station as part of a free fare zone, providing a cost-effective gateway into the airport for many users.

Sub-regional response to the National Bus Strategy.

As noted in last year's report, the board developed an effective working arrangement during the pandemic's early months with a range of partners to develop a sub-regional response to the new National Bus Strategy. With the return of Heathrow subsidy for some routes through the Sustainable Travel Zone programme, and the confirmation of a number of short-term extensions of the Government's Covid Bus Service Support Grant, the immediate threat of system wide shut down was averted.

With ambitious targets set by local authorities for the increase in mode share of buses through their new Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs), and similar ambition shown in the airport's new surface access strategy, the board is currently scoping a relaunch of the Bus and Coach Special Interest Group to explore opportunities to work in partnership to develop a sub-regional BSIP. This would look to quantify the benefits of creating a virtuous circle of investment in bus provision, and identify opportunities to improve speed and reliability on the ground (through, for example, new services, technological innovation and on-highway bus priority etc). This will launch later in 2022 and work through 2023/24.

Active Travel Special Interest Group

A key focus for the Forum in 2022 was seeking to increase the focus on improving facilities for active travel access to the airport. To this end we launched a Special Interest Group to bring stakeholders

together around this topic and explore how best progress could be made. This group has been enthusiastically chaired on my behalf by board member Christian Wolmar. This has led to Heathrow drafting a new Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), updating work that started but was never published during expansion. By working in partnership with councils around the airport and TfL, this will identify opportunities for improvements on key routes and help identify funding to deliver these. The report will be published in 2023. A key improvement for cyclists also coming on stream next year will be the renewal of direct access to the central terminal area via the road tunnel side bores under the runway, after almost a decade of not being able to use this facility. This follows consistent pressure by HATF to retain focus on this project.

We had a well attended wider forum in summer 2022 dedicated to this subject, and were pleased to welcome Active Travel England (ATE) to detail how they will work to support geographies that are ambitious to grow cycling and walking mode share. We feel that the Heathrow area is certainly one of those and we look forward to working with ATE to make that a reality. We also heard exciting research on the future role that e-bikes may play in widening access to active travel and achieving modal shift from private car. Once again, micro-mobility is an exciting space at present and we look forward to doing further work on this in 2023.

Engaging with the CAA around the development and assessment of Heathrow's regulatory settlement

Building on work started in 2020/21, we continued to try and influence the work of the CAA in respect to their support for sustainable transport.

The CAA do have a duty to consider the impact of the airport on the environment, however this is one of their 'secondary' duties, and in truth evidence that it was properly taken into consideration during the review of the H7 business plan was limited.

We continued to make representations to the Authority on this matter through the last year. It was therefore pleasing to see both a confirmed capital sum to support decarbonisation measures, and the set up of a 'sustainability panel' to help drive focus and generally inform the work of the authority on environmental issues.

We enjoyed a presentation by Abigail Grenfell, Sustainability lead at the CAA, to our board in September 2022 on the emerging work of the panel. We look forward to engaging further with her, her colleagues on the Consumer Panel and the economic regulation team in the coming months and years in order to get the best possible settlement for the Environment for the next regulatory period (2026-2030).

There is also now a review of the CAA underway and we will look to continue our representations on this matter to further strengthen the weight given to environmental issues.

Jet Zero strategy

Following representations made by the Forum last year, it was pleasing to see that surface access (previously completely missing from this document) received a useful mention in the final version, which was a key recommendation in our response:

3.60. We will work with airports, other government departments, local authorities, and other interested bodies to help airports in England improve their surface access through developing Master Plans and Surface Access Strategies. An aviation passenger's journey includes more than the flight itself, and we want to ensure we have the right policies in place to encourage passengers and employees to travel on sustainable modes of transport to and from the airport where possible. As part of this, we will encourage airports to work with airlines, local authorities and local transport providers to consider how they can develop integrated service offerings with surface transport providers.

In response to this, we look forward to working with the CAA, DfT and other stakeholders as appropriate to highlight the excellent work we do in the Heathrow area in this space.

Ongoing support for improved rail access to the airport

With expansion paused; government attention focussed on the idea of 'levelling up' (read to mean a severe restriction on infrastructure spend in the capital and wider south east) the prospects of significant progress on expensive rail improvements was always going to be slim.

HATF continued its support for the preferred scheme for Western Rail Access to Heathrow (WRaTH), and for progress to be made on better defining the Southern Access to Heathrow (SATH) proposal. At our January board we received an update from the Department for Transport, highlighting that any work on this is to be part of the Rail Network Enhancement Pipeline (RNEP), details of which were due to be announced 'shortly'. During the meeting we expressed dismay of the ongoing lack of progress on these schemes, however at the time of writing we are sadly still awaiting these details.

Recognising a need to refocus on this, the wider forum event in November 2022 will focus on rail schemes and how these can be progressed.

Council for Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow (CISHA)

Given the pause in the expansion programme, and the significantly reduced funding available to the airport, major changes in how the airport engages with its stakeholders and local communities was undertaken in 2020/21. This led to the winding up of the Heathrow Community Engagement Board (HCEB) and the launch of the Council for Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow (CISHA). In summer 2022 Baroness Liz Sugg was announced as the new independent chair of the Council. I have already enjoyed meetings with Liz and look forward to engaging further with CISHA, through its quarterly board meetings and via the newly instigated Chairs' panel. I also look forward to the public launch of the Council later in 2022.

Accessibility improvements

At our June 2022 board we welcomed representatives from the Heathrow Access Advisory Group (HAAG) on a discussion about how we can best improve accessibility of the network serving the airport for those people with mobility impairments. Key points raised were the importance of accurate and timely information for users, and ensuring that real time support and assistance are available en-route and within airport terminals. We will continue to engage with HAAG and other stakeholders to ensure this important topic remains a key focus of both the airport and other board members.

Car parking and supporting zero emission vehicle take up

The board engaged with Heathrow's emerging zero emission vehicle strategy, exploring the extent to which the airport should invest in EV charging within its assets. The strategy will be released later in 2022. We also opened up a discussion about staff car parking controls. Currently the arrangement is largely a free for all and this limits both operational efficiency, but also the contribution parking can make to delivering on surface access strategy targets and the net zero agenda. Further discussions on opportunities to apply a more strategic lens to this difficult subject will be had in 2023.

Responding to national consultations

A raft of important national consultations were released in early 2022, including proposals for the Great British Railways Whole Industry Strategic Plan (WISP): early scoping work on National Highways Roads investment strategy 3 programme and; a new National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) by the National Infrastructure Commission. We fed into all of these - either directly such as with the NIA consultation here: [hatf-response-to-national-infrastructure-commission-consultation-on-second-national-infrastructure-assessment-feb-2022.pdf](#) or via contributions to HAL's own responses.

Our central point in many of our contributions was a need to think of the transport network around the airport as a single system, rather than breaking it up into modal silos. We suggested that the experience from the Heathrow Area Transport Forum in bringing together stakeholders from statutory transport agencies, businesses and local communities active within a functional economic market area, but independent of any formal organisational structure in terms of spatial governance, may be helpful in this regard.

We also made the point that Heathrow has a unique context on the edge of London, with elements of urban, peri-urban and rural transport typologies, and therefore is a good place to explore novel and innovative ways of managing travel demand with relevance for the whole country.

General updates

More generally during this period, HATF has received regular activity updates from the airport, and by continuing to bring together board members from across a variety of statutory transport providers, regulators, local authorities and business representatives was also a useful discussion forum and space for best practice sharing around pandemic recovery.

Summary

As we move onto 2023, we look forward to a quickening of pace in the implementation of the new Surface Access Strategy and some concrete examples of this in practice being implemented on the ground for the benefit of passengers, employees and the environment.

Val Shawcross

Valerie Shawcross CBE - Independent Chair, Heathrow Area Transport Forum