



HEATHROW AREA
TRANSPORT FORUM

December 2023

Heathrow Area Transport Forum – Chair’s Annual Report for 2022/23

Following a competitive recruitment process in the summer, I was delighted to be confirmed as the new chair of the Forum, taking over from Val Shawcross CBE after nearly four years in post. I’ve been a member of the forum since it was reformed under Val and have seen first-hand the important work it does in supporting improvements in sustainable transport provision around the airport. As the departing Chief Executive of Transport Focus, I’ve had many years of experience in representing the voice of the consumer, and influencing decision makers at senior levels across the transport industry. Despite this experience on the national stage, I can say it is rare to see so many key stakeholders come together in a single room to focus on a specific issue in the way that we do at HATF.

In accepting the role I’m clearly hopeful for the future, and I believe we are seeing some excellent progress being made - with particularly high public transport mode shares among passengers recorded in the summer as the Elizabeth Line delivers on its promises. Outside of the shiny big infrastructure projects though, I’m also impressed by the work that Heathrow’s surface access team have done in such short time to ramp up support for airport workers potentially impacted by the extension of ULEZ. In particular, the introduction, extension or improvement of some 23 bus services (with more on the way) under the Sustainable Travel Zone initiative that HATF helped formulate was genuinely astounding. Given the airport remains loss making after a well-documented turbulent three years, this commitment to supporting lower paid workers with sustainable travel options is commendable.

During my term, I’m keen that we do more to develop our understanding of travel behaviour in greater depth – both in terms of passengers but also workers for whom we have less data and insight available (the last full employee travel survey was pre-pandemic).

We also need to do more to understand the surface access needs of the freight industry – which really kept the airport going during the pandemic, but for which we have incomplete knowledge.

While big projects like the Elizabeth Line do a lot of heavy lifting on delivering modal-shift, it feels unlikely we will see very significant public investment in infrastructure in the south-east in the immediate future – that means we need to get smarter in deployment of value for money interventions like coach, bus and active travel. That said, channelling some innovative new financial techniques designed to help private sector investment in infrastructure, I hold great hope that 2024 will be the year we finally get some real traction again on delivering a new rail connection to the south – more on that below.

Since the last HATF annual report by Val, the team have been particularly busy on a wide range of projects which are summarised below.

Whilst I took the chair from August, I remain in post at Transport Focus until the end of 2023, so the first few months were something of a soft-start and I'm genuinely looking forward to getting properly stuck into these projects and more in 2024.



General Scrutiny Work

Ultra Low Emission Zone (ULEZ) Extension - Mitigation

Following confirmation that the Mayor of London intended to implement an extension of the ULEZ across the whole of Greater London from end August 2023, HATF supported the work of Heathrow's surface access team to implement a wide range of interventions intended to mitigate the impact of this policy on employees. There was a particular focus on helping those that were at the lower end of the pay scale and lived outside of the Greater London Authority area and therefore had no recourse to the Mayor's scrappage scheme. The suite of measures included a significant increase in bus provision, ramp up of active travel promotion and a relaunched car loan scheme. A park and ride scheme was also set up just outside the ULEZ area that colleagues with non-compliant vehicles could continue to use.

The HATF board were impressed at the pace and scale of the airport's response, and evidence of its effectiveness can perhaps be seen in the relatively low utilisation of that designated park and ride car park.

We look forward to gaining greater understanding in the new year as to the actual changes in travel behaviour that have occurred, and in particular whether there has been any modal shift to sustainable modes – and indeed measurable improvement in air quality.



EV Charging

HATF was pleased to review the emerging EV charging strategy for the airport.

EV's form a very important tool in decarbonising travel and improving air quality. However, they obviously still create negative externalities through congestion and road danger in particular – whilst also still generating pollution in respect to particulate matter (e.g. tyre wear). Whilst HATF supported HAL's attempts to deliver improved charging facilities for passengers, we were also keen that these did not come at "any cost" to airport users, nor actually induce demand to the area by EV owners detouring off the strategic road network to take advantage of charging facilities. In the board's view, the final strategy strikes this balance well and includes some innovative solutions including a mobile charging unit that potentially allow customer vehicles to be recharged ahead of departure without requiring expensive and disproportionate wholesale retrofit to car parking assets.

Freight strategy

At the beginning of the year we reviewed and commented on the airport's emerging freight strategy, particularly in respect to opportunities to improve environmental outcomes and reducing negative impacts on local communities. We were pleased to see innovative ideas that emerged in the expansion era being picked up again and explored in more detail - in particular better ways of managing access to the main cargo terminal and improved facilities for waiting vehicles. The airport are clearly alive to the changes in propulsion that are coming down the line for HGVs and are keen to work with surrounding land owners to consider how local demand from freight and logistics, coupled

with aviation requirements, might allow for the rapid deployment of more carbon friendly fuels including hydrogen. This is an area we want to get into in more depth in 2024.

Regulation

An ongoing theme for the forum is that we are concerned about the weighting given by the Civil Aviation Authority (as economic regulator of the airport) to environmental considerations. We fed back these views into consultations on the new Heathrow business plan and were pleased to see support being retained for many sustainability measures (albeit not at the level we deem necessary to fully deliver zero emission airport across Scope 1,2 and 3). As one of the few voices that aren't the airlines or Heathrow in this discussion, we feel our perspective is valuable and plan to continue to make representations in this space in the coming years.

Spotlight on: Southern Rail – consensus building work with Heathrow Strategic Planning Group

Following on from the successful Southern Access panel debate at the HATF wider forum event in 2022 - where consensus building was identified as the key challenge in moving this work forward - we worked collaboratively with forum member Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG) and colleagues at Heathrow to co-commission a review of the Heathrow Southern Rail Limited (HSRL) proposal.

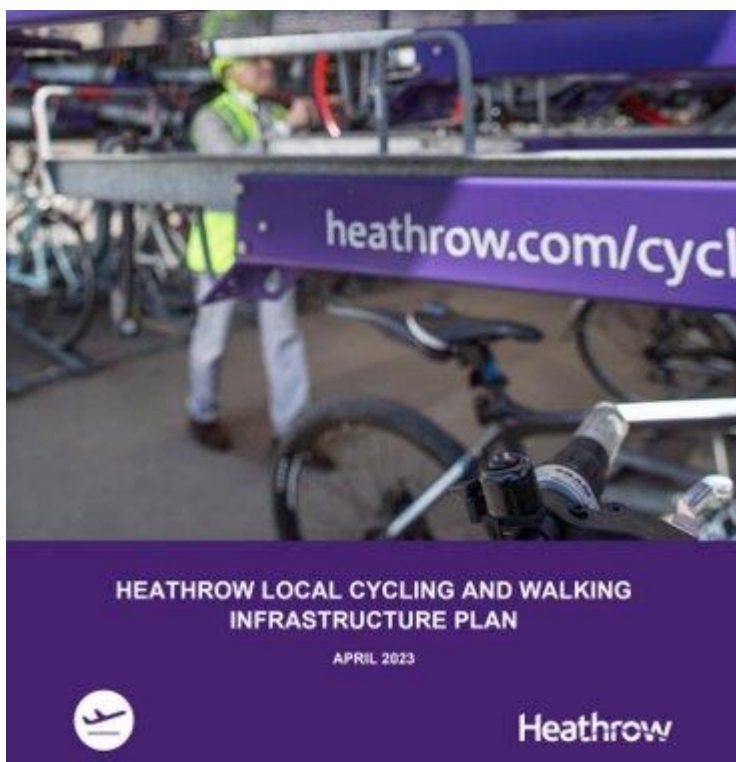
This project was seen by members to be the most advanced in terms of concept development and also has a seemingly credible funding mechanism via the leveraging of farebox revenue that might reduce or even remove the need for public subsidy.

Arup were asked to undertake high level due-diligence exercise on the HSR Ltd scheme - with a particular focus on deliverability. In tandem, they were also asked to reach out to all key stakeholders, in particular local authorities around the airport on the route, and statutory transport providers like Network Rail and Transport for London for their feedback.

The results, presented at this year's wider forum, are encouraging. The two key areas are concern at this stage are identified gaps in funding and how these can be filled, and ongoing concerns held by Spelthorne Borough Council on the impacts a heavy rail scheme would have on Staines town centre and some sensitive areas of nature conservation. We had a good discussion at the forum on next steps, and will be actively working with HSPG and HAL to keep momentum on this project as we move in 2024.

Special Interest Groups

A key characteristic of the work of the forum is the set up of Special Interest Groups (SIGs) to undertake deep dives into specific areas of concern as identified by the board or other stakeholders. 2023 was a busy year for our SIGs, with no fewer than three in operation - updates on these below.

Active Travel

2023 saw the successful conclusion of our Active Travel Special Interest Group which culminated in development of a Heathrow area wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) – for the first time jointly endorsed by all neighbouring councils. Working with HSPG we have also secured over £1m from National Highways to develop proposals in more detail, and implement improvements in some locations. The work of this SIG is now complete, however the area of active travel will remain a focus for the Forum, with a planned review of progress in delivering the plan scheduled for 2024. The full plan is available here: [Heathrow Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)

Anti-social Parking

Demand for parking around the airport has become an increasing issue for local residents and is having real impacts on their wellbeing. The causes of this are complicated but include:

- Mini-cab drivers looking to pick up a fare without going via the Authorized Vehicle Area (AVA).
- Rogue meet and greet operators who park passengers vehicles in neighbourhood streets, rather than designated areas of off-street parking. Often there are misleading claims about where the vehicle will be stored, occasionally involving trading standards.
- Freight and logistics activities, particularly those vehicles waiting to access the cargo terminal
- Passengers taking advantage of unrestricted kerbside to park for free near the airport
- There has also been some concern that there may be airport workers parking in neighbouring streets immediately outside of the ULEZ to avoid that charge, however evidence for this is currently limited.

Working with HAL colleagues and the Local Community Forum, HATF convened a Parking SIG, bringing together for the first time a wide range of stakeholders including various representatives from local councils (elected members, parking management officers, trading standards etc), the British Parking Association, police and TfL - who together have the power to implement different solutions that will help tackle the scourge of anti-social parking around the airport on residential roads. We have held two successful meetings to date, with bilateral meetings being undertaken in the next couple of months before a further meeting planned for early 2024.

Bus

Following on from the Heathrow 'vision for buses' produced in 2021 to help inform the development of Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIP) by authorities outside of London, HATF, once again working collaboratively with HSPG, have commissioned Arup to develop a Heathrow specific BSIP. This is looking to put, for the first time, the airport at the centre of bus network service planning and aims to develop a wide suite of interventions to improve bus mode share. After a successful launch meeting, further discussions on this will be had at the Wider Forum event in November, with a second SIG meeting planned for December.

Council for Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow (CISHA)

Major changes in how the airport engages with its stakeholders and local communities were undertaken in 2020/21 which led to the winding up of the Heathrow Community Engagement Board (HCEB) and the launch of the Council for Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow (CISHA). I look forward to engaging further with CISHA and its new chair in 2024.

Summary

As we move onto 2024, we look forward to a quickening of pace in the implementation of the Surface Access Strategy, and in particular the realisation of some concrete examples of delivery on the ground for the benefit of passengers, employees and the environment.

Anthony Smith - Independent Chair, Heathrow Area Transport Forum