

# TEMPORARY MIXED MODE AT HEATHROW MUST BE JUST THAT – TEMPORARY.

With the significant reduction in flights, countless residents around Heathrow are mentioning how clear the air is, the skies are quieter and birdsong can be heard as they truly relax in their gardens for the first time in decades. It has been a welcome relief for many who, in normal times, have been subjected to the constant barrage of aircraft overhead.

Heathrow recently scaled down the use of the runways with the introduction of mixed mode – arrivals and departures on one runway – with runway use alternating every Monday. This is a temporary measure during the current COVID-19 pandemic which has seen global air travel significantly reduced.

However, rather than be lulled into a false sense of security – air travel will eventually pick up – we must continue to monitor Heathrow's operations and hold them to account. In 2002, mixed mode was mooted in expansion proposals to increase flights from around 480,000 to 540,000. With technological improvements in the last two decades and the introduction of Independent Parallel Approaches this figure could rise to around 565,000 flights.

The recent Court of Appeal ruling dealt a significant blow to Heathrow's third runway expansion proposals. It found that the Government had not properly taken into account its own commitments on climate change and therefore did not comply with Section 6 of the Planning Act. This means that the Government must amend the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) or withdraw the statement's designation as a national policy statement

The Government had no appetite to challenge the decision but Heathrow, along with the other interested parties of Arora Group (Heathrow West) and Heathrow Hub, was not content to let that judgment prevail and sought leave to appeal through the Supreme Court – a ruling on this is due within weeks.

Regardless of the Supreme Court decision, or the impact of COVID-19 on air travel, you can wager Heathrow's relentless pursuit of expansion will continue. John Holland-Kaye, in an interview on 1st May, reiterated that Heathrow will require a third runway within 10 years.

His comments highlight that Heathrow's overarching goal is to expand – we believe a third runway will never see the light of day. One way to achieve some form of expansion would be the introduction of full mixed mode operations on both

runways. Some may think that mixed mode would be the lesser of two evils and a solution to Heathrow's expansion problem. The reality is mixed mode would bring an end to the current half day respite from aircraft noise enjoyed by thousands of people; there would be an increase in ground noise affecting more people; there would be an increase in road traffic including HGVs leading to poorer air quality and more emissions impacting climate change which is the very thing the Government did not take into account in the ANPS.

The current mixed mode operations must end once COVID-19 restrictions start to ease, not as a way to introduce a form of expansion at Heathrow. We are ready to fight any new battle for expansion at Heathrow.

**Geraldine Nicholson**

**Stop Heathrow Expansion**