

There is no case for another London runway but there is...

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[From this mornings's Observer:](#)

Any moment now, the [Airports Commission](#) will finally publish its recommendation for new runway capacity at either Heathrow or Gatwick. What will be missing from this report is a third option that would be preferred by many: no new runway at either airport.

Britain's skies are already some of the busiest in the world and Howard Davies knows that these expansion plans cannot be made to fit with the UK's long-term commitments under the Climate Change Act. Contrary to aviation lobby rhetoric, a new runway is not needed to allow more international business flights, which have been declining steadily since the turn of the century. The hub airport argument is a smokescreen. In reality, growing demand for air travel is concentrated in the short-haul leisure sector and among a small, wealthy minority of the population. It is more of these flights that a new runway will in practice service.

This growth in flights is driven by air fares that are kept artificially low through generous tax subsidies; aviation is exempt from fuel duty by international treaty and zero rated for VAT. Yet these tax breaks almost exclusively benefit the richest section of British society. Our analysis of passenger survey data shows that 15% of the UK population are taking 70% of all our flights. That's why we are calling today to replace air passenger duty with a frequent flyer levy that taxes travellers according to how often they fly, shifting the burden away from families flying to their one annual holiday and on to the frequent flyers who are driving expansion. Our research shows that this "polluter pays" approach would enable the UK to meet our climate targets without making flying the preserve of the rich — and without needing to build any new runways.

John Stewart, HACAN

Stewart Wallis, New Economics Foundation

John Sauven, Greenpeace UK

Joe Jenkins, Friends of the Earth

Stephen Joseph, Campaign for Better Transport

Manuel Cortes, TSSA Union

Tahir Latif, PCS Union Aviation Group president

John Christensen, Tax Justice Network

Duncan Exley, Equality Trust

Richard Murphy, Tax Research UK

Ed Gillespie, London Sustainability commissioner and co-founder Futerra

Andrew Simms, co-founder of the New Weather Institute & fellow of NEF

Elena Blackmore, Public Interest Research Centre

Jamie Andrews, Loco2

Leo Murray, 10:10

Richard Dixon, Friends of the Earth Scotland

Colin Howden, Transform Scotland

There's more on this here, [in the Observer this morning.](#)