



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Rachel Reeves MP  
Chancellor of the Exchequer  
HM Treasury  
The Correspondence & Enquiry unit  
1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Our Ref: SO71325

5 March 2026

Dear Chancellor,

I am writing in response to your answer to my question during the Spring Statement. My question was about the serious and growing issue of youth unemployment, but you responded with an assertion about the economic growth potential of a third runway at Heathrow.

As I am sure you are aware, I have asked repeatedly for the government to provide data to support the assertion that a third runway will have a significantly positive impact on our economy, but this has not been forthcoming. Therefore, I welcome your reference to this matter and for beginning a dialogue on the economic impact of a third runway.

I have presented below several of the key figures which support the view that a third runway at Heathrow would not bring the growth which you believe it would. I would welcome sight of your evidence which refutes these statistics:

1. The Updated Appraisal Report (p.44) that accompanied the last Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS) shows that the Net Present Value for a third runway ranges from just £3.3bn to minus £2.2bn.

An estimated 75% of the capacity of a third runway will be taken up by international to international transfer passengers.

The Department for Transport's own guidance suggests that the economic benefits of such passengers do not contribute to the welfare of the UK and should not be counted. Excluding these passengers from the DfT's most recent assessment – something the DfT itself recommends - could reduce the NPV by a further £5.5bn.

2. The cost of expansion has risen to £49bn – this doesn't even factor in the necessary road surface upgrades and at least an additional £100bn in carbon abatement costs. With Heathrow Airport Limited already in over £16bn worth of debt, I struggle to see how this investment will see returns for the taxpayer.

3. Heathrow has admitted that costs will be pushed onto the airlines and consequently passengers. This will just make flying more expensive for the average Londoner.

4. The DfT forecast that growth at non-London airports between 2016 and 2030 would have been 24% less if there were a third runway at Heathrow and 17% less between 2016 and 2050. The Transport Select Committee also concluded that there will be 170,000 fewer flights from non-London airports compared to a no expansion scenario.

Expansion at Heathrow will harm efforts to drive economic growth in regions outside London.

5. The New Economics Foundation also asserted that the current dynamics of the UK's net cross-border travel results in spending deficit of £43bn with twice as many people flying out of the UK than flying in, thus exporting cash outside of the economy.

These are just some of the studies which contradict your assertion that a third runway at Heathrow would bring growth to the UK.

However, I would welcome an open conversation if the government has its own evidence that would back up your statement on Tuesday that a third runway would drive growth to the UK.

I look forward to hearing from you.  
Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah Olney".

Sarah Olney  
Member of Parliament for Richmond Park