

AIRPORT EXPANSION DAVID LEARMOUNT / LONDON

UK government seeks to add capacity in south-east

Options are building a new airport and adding runways at Heathrow, Luton and Stansted

London Heathrow Airport could get a third runway, London Stansted up to three more, and London Luton a longer runway under proposals in a consultation paper unveiled by UK transport secretary Alistair Darling. In addition, there could be a new four-runway airport in north Kent and another "small" airport at former RAF Alconbury in East Anglia.

The government says the "most urgent" need for additional runways is in the south-east UK, where airports serving London are nearly at full capacity and crucial to the nation's trading capability. International Air Transport Association director general Giovanni Bisignani says: "If the UK is to maintain its leadership role in world air transport, extra runway capacity is needed in the south-east and the time to take the decisions leading to that is now...a new runway at London Heathrow is a priority."

Heathrow would get a 2,000m short-haul runway parallel to the existing pair well outside its northern boundaries, just south of the M4 motorway, but able to handle simultaneous approaches with the current runways. It would increase Heathrow's present annual air transport movement (ATM) capacity from 460,000 to 655,000.

London Gatwick will not get

another runway because the government says it will not overturn a 1979 agreement that no new runway would be planned there before 2019. The British Air Transport Association (BATA) says: "At least three new runways are needed in the south-east and there is a very strong case, supported by all UK airlines, for early developments at both Heathrow and Gatwick."

Stansted, the favourite to get clearance to expand, could be developed from the present one-runway to four, taking the maximum potential capacity from 260,000 ATM to 756,000 ATM, with an estimated 746,000 ATM being used by 2030.

There are two options for a

3,000m runway at London Luton instead of the existing 2,150m east-west runway. One option would be parallel, to the south, using the present runway as a taxiway, the other realigned about 220°/040°. Mainly because of a more efficient taxiing system, maximum capacity would increase from 100,000 ATM to 240,000 ATM, nearly five times actual usage in 2000.

Proposals for new airports include developing Alconbury, in Cambridgeshire, and a major four-runway airport at Cliffe in north Kent on the Thames estuary. However, the latter would occupy designated environmentally protected land and have a high bird-strike hazard.



London Stansted could see three runways added to boost throughput

CHARLES TYLER

Qantas moves in on Air New Zealand turf

Air New Zealand (ANZ) faces a strong domestic challenge from Qantas, which is to boost its in-country fleet from four to seven Boeing 737s. Qantas will set up a New Zealand-based company to fly the aircraft and has applied for a local air operator's certificate for the new Jetconnect subsidiary.

The move is expected to put pressure on the New Zealand carrier and government to review Qantas bid to set up a "partnership of equals" by taking a significant equity stake in ANZ. Ahead of parliamentary elections late last week the opposition National Party called on finance minister Michael Cullen to divulge the Labour government's plans to sell a stake in the carrier.

"Selling a strategic stake in ANZ to Qantas would marginalise the national carrier into becoming a regional airline and a minor player in both the trans-Tasman and international markets," claims the National Party. Earlier this year the New Zealand government committed NZ\$1 billion (\$488 million) to save the carrier from bankruptcy. ANZ describes the National Party's claim that a deal has been struck with Qantas as "totally incorrect".

The statement followed confirmation that Qantas is setting up Jetconnect as wholly owned subsidiary in New Zealand after its wet-lease contractor Zazu collapsed in March. Qantas has since been operating in New Zealand under its Australian air operator's certificate. The new Qantas-owned airline has advertised for local staff, and is seeking over 80 pilots to replace contract pilots flying leased aircraft under the Qantas banner. The fleet will be locally registered and regulated by the New Zealand civil aviation authority. ■ Qantas will add four more Boeing 737-800s to current orders in early 2003, and take options for a further four by early 2004.

FLIGHT MANAGEMENT KIERAN DALY / LONDON

Delayed FMS nears in-service trials

Thales Avionics and Smiths Aerospace plan to begin delayed in-service trials of their jointly developed Airbus flight management system (FMS) in September.

Despite the severe delays, Smiths director of Airbus programmes Dale Masbruch expects European certification soon, allowing 10 Alitalia aircraft to begin using the system in September, ending Honeywell's Airbus FMS monop-

oly. A similar US trial should start in October. "The system will be ready for general introduction at the start of 2003," he says.

Smiths and Thales launched the programme in 1998, but experienced an 18-month delay caused by software integration problems. Customers were forced to fit an interim Honeywell FMS, although none cancelled their orders. The first release, Revision 1, is intended

for single-aisle aircraft. Revision 2, for widebodies, will take another 18 months. Most orders so far have been for narrowbody aircraft.

Masbruch says it has not yet been decided which customers will take delivery next. Customers include Air France, British Airways, Korean Air and US Airways.

The companies recently lost the contest to be the sole FMS source for the Airbus A380 to Honeywell.