

# The Telegraph

## Sir Howard Davies: Heathrow is the only choice for airport expansion



Heathrow airport CREDIT: REUTERS

By [Kate McCann](#), senior political correspondent

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Heathrow Airport alone must be given the go ahead for expansion, the man appointed by the Government to review airport capacity says today.

Sir Howard Davies, the chair of the airports commission, said the case for expanding Heathrow is now "overwhelming" and has "strengthened in recent months" post-Brexit.

[Writing in today's Daily Telegraph](#), Sir Howard's comments come just a day before Theresa May is set to announce the government's favoured option on airport expansion and are likely to reflect government thinking.

Last week it was suggested that Mrs May could announce expansion to both Heathrow and Gatwick, but Sir Howard's comments - coming just 24 hours before the announcement - suggest this is unlikely.

He warns that failure to expand Heathrow alone would be "a mistake".



Sir Howard Davies CREDIT: REUTERS

Sir Howard, who spent four years examining the options on airport expansion on behalf of the government also criticises David Cameron over his failure to make a decision sooner.

He brands the former Prime Minister "an immovable object"

Sir Howard says: "The arguments for making a decision now, and for Heathrow, have strengthened in recent months. Overseas, the lack of a decision is seen as a symbol of Britain's inability to decide on its future as a trading nation.

"And the need for a clear strategic direction is more important since the referendum result. The rhetoric about becoming a European Singapore with a "blue water" trading focus seems empty if we cannot connect to the new markets we wish to serve.

"Gatwick is largely a European short-haul airport. It is also oriented towards outward tourism. About 70 per cent of its tourist passengers are Brits going to the sun. Sadly, relatively few residents of Marbella and Corfu come here for their summer break.

"At Heathrow the tourist traffic is largely inbound. With our huge balance of payments deficit we need more high-spending American and Asian tourists to balance the books."

'Die-in' protest causes minor disruption at Heathrow AirportPlay!01:43

Sir Howard warns that it would be "a mistake" to expand both Heathrow and Gatwick airports, adding: "Allowing two proposals to continue could mean neither is built."

And in a clear nod to the fact that Gatwick would not be the right choice Sir Howard states that Birmingham could be a better decision for a second round of airport expansion expected in the coming years.

His intervention comes just a day before a key group of Cabinet ministers are due to make a final decision on whether to expand Heathrow airport or Gatwick, a decision that is likely to prompt a row at the very heart of the Government.

Earlier this month Theresa May vowed to give her ministers free rein to air their views on the decision once it has been made in an unprecedented step designed to take some of the heat out of the inevitable row.



Boris Johnson is opposed to Heathrow expansion CREDIT: GEOFF PUGH

Boris Johnson, the Foreign Secretary, has previously vowed to lie down in front of bulldozers if Heathrow gets the go-ahead, while senior Conservative MP Zac Goldsmith has vowed to resign his seat in the Commons.

Sir Howard writes that it is "simply not possible" to put the decision off any longer if London is to grow and prosper following the vote to leave the EU.

Mrs May previously spoke out against expanding Heathrow but has since met with Sir Howard and has said she was merely reflecting the government's position at the time.

His remarks will be viewed as a clear indication that Number 10 is poised to announce that Heathrow airport will be expanded at the expense of investment into Gatwick.

A decision will be made by the airports cabinet committee and announced in the House of Commons on Tuesday.





Chris Grayling the Transport Secretary CREDIT: JULIAN ANDREWS

The intervention came as Transport secretary Chris Grayling warned that airport expansion will result in "challenge and opposition" whatever option is chosen.

Mr Grayling told the BBC's Andrew Marr show that no decision has been taken on any of the three options; extending an existing runway at Heathrow or building a new runway at either Gatwick or Heathrow.

Ministers are expected to announce a "world-class" compensation package for residents living near the area earmarked for Heathrow expansion if the airport gets the go-ahead.

A report in the Sunday Times stated that those living in around 4,500 homes that will either be demolished or could suffer blight because they are so close to the airport will be offered the market value of their houses plus 25% as well as all legal fees and stamp duty costs paid, according to a leaked report drawn up by the business analysts Ernst & Young.

Mr Grayling said: "The question here is that we have to, in my view, take a decision that is in the interest of our nation.

"What delivers us the best connectivity, the right approach for the future at a time when we want to grow international trade links, open up new opportunities for Britain.

"Of course there will be opposition, of course there will be challenge whatever we do."

