



**REPORT TO LOCAL COMMITTEE  
(RUNNYMEDE)**

**HEATHROW AIRTRACK UPDATE REPORT**

**13th February 2009**

**KEY ISSUE**

This report is to update members on the BAA Airtrack proposed scheme.  
This report is for information only.

**SUMMARY**

The report indicates the background to BAA's 2008 consultation on the Airtrack proposals, Surrey County Council's position, the working groups set up to examine technical matters, and a recent statement by the Government on the matter.

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 This report gives a brief update on the Heathrow Airtrack scheme, with the latest position as at 2 February.
- 1.2 BAA's consultation process closed in December 2008. They report that they received around 1,000 consultation responses, of which around 700 were about level crossing problems.
- 1.3 The timetable for the scheme is broadly as given in previous briefings to the Executive and Local Committees. BAA intend to submit a Transport and Works Act application for this scheme in April 2009. Shortly afterwards, the details of the scheme will be published and interested parties will be given 42 days in which to raise objections. Assuming that objections are raised, a public inquiry will be held, probably in the Autumn of 2009. If the Secretary of State gives consent to the scheme, construction is expected to start in 2010 with the scheme becoming operational in late 2013. There is no prospect of the scheme becoming operational for the 2012 Olympic Games in London.

## **2.0 SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL'S POSITION**

- 2.1 The County Council's Executive considered this scheme in its meeting on 2nd December 2008 and resolved:

(1) That the principle of the Airtrack project continue to be supported as having the potential to improve significantly surface access to Heathrow Airport from South London and Surrey, with consequent major social and economic benefits.

(2) That the justifiably strong concerns that Airtrack as currently envisaged will seriously affect the amenities of many local residents and disadvantage local businesses and traders be recognised. Particular issues are:

a. The scheme will cause substantial increases in down-time for several level crossings, most notably four crossings in the Egham area. This will increase road journey times and traffic congestion and add to community fragmentation. This could in turn discourage residents from using local trading outlets and generally inhibit business activity in the areas affected.

b. A potential problem with capacity at Chertsey railway station.

c. Reduced Staines town centre parking opportunities caused by the 'Staines Chord'.

(3) That BAA, in conjunction with Surrey County Council and other partners, be urged to address these and other concerns without delay to arrive at area-wide solutions to significantly reduce or eliminate the problems that have been raised. These are likely to require modifications to existing road and rail networks and structures, particularly in the area of the Egham level crossings, and will therefore need funding from the overall Airtrack budget.

(4) To conclude with regret that, if solutions cannot be found as in (3) above, then Airtrack in its present proposed form cannot be supported.

### **3.0 ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY**

- 3.1 The Transport for Surrey Board decided to set up a technical officers group to look for solutions to the problems identified in the County Council's decision, and any other Surrey-specific problems raised by stakeholders. This technical group, chaired by Iain Reeve, Head of Transport for Surrey, has met twice since then, with a membership that includes the County Council, affected borough councils including Runnymede BC, Highways Agency, Network Rail, South West Trains and SEEDA.
- 3.2 This group has worked to identify a comprehensive set of problems and, for each problem, to establish how best to investigate potential solutions. Two sub-groups have been set up to examine specific issues:
- A group looking at Spelthorne specific problems, under the chairmanship of John Brooks, Spelthorne Borough Council; and
  - A group considering the impact of the scheme on level crossings, under the chairmanship of Peter Sims, Runnymede Borough Council.
- 3.3 The groups are working quickly to examine each problem in considerable detail. For example, the level crossing group has commissioned detailed traffic modelling of the affected sites. The work of these groups will enable the partners to understand the extent of the problems and the possible mitigation measures and so will inform the Transport and Works Act process. It may be possible to resolve some of the identified issues before the Transport and Works Act submission is made, and so reduce the number of objections to the scheme. The groups will continue to work on unresolved issues after the Transport and Works application has been made.

### **4.0 GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON HEATHROW**

- 4.1 On 15 January 2009, the Secretary of State for Transport, Geoff Hoon, made a statement to the House of Commons about transport infrastructure, including the Government's decision to allow the expansion of Heathrow airport. This statement included a paragraph about the Heathrow Airtrack proposals:

"The Government also welcomes the lead being taken by BAA to promote the Airtrack project providing direct rail access to the airport at Terminal 5 from the south and west. The Department will work with BAA and Network Rail to consider this and other schemes to improve connections from Heathrow to places like Waterloo and Guildford, Reading and other stations on the Great Western Mainline."

### **5.0 CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The statement at 4.1 indicates that the Government are inclined to look favourably on a scheme like Heathrow Airtrack. As the Secretary of State has a statutory responsibility to consider the Transport and Works Act application, he could not have offered a more positive statement on the scheme.

## ITEM 7

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Background papers: Improving public transport access to Heathrow Airport  
(Heathrow Airtrack Consultation Brochure 2, October  
2008)  
Annexes: None