

Airports Commission Final Report – Parliamentary Statement and Debate, 1 July 2015

[The Secretary of State for Transport \(Mr Patrick McLoughlin\):](#)

With permission, I would like to make a statement about the airports commission’s final report, published earlier today. I received a copy yesterday evening, and I have had copies put in the Library of the House and the Vote Office. First, I will review the commission’s process to date; secondly, I will describe the next steps.

In September 2012, the Government appointed Sir Howard Davies to lead a Commission to consider how the UK could maintain its status as an international aviation hub and, in particular, provide capacity in the south-east. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Sir Howard for his leadership. I thank, too, his fellow commissioners—Sir John Armitt, Ricky Burdett, Vivienne Cox and Dame Julia King—for their hard work over a long period. I acknowledge hon. Members from all sides of the House who have campaigned vigorously on behalf of their constituents, and I am sure they will continue to do so.

There are strong opinions on this issue. It is not easy to resolve. For the Government, the task is to balance local interests against the wider, longer-term benefits for the United Kingdom. This report is part of that process. Over 50 different propositions were considered. In December 2013, the commission shortlisted three schemes for further consideration: two at Heathrow, and one at Gatwick. It also made recommendations for improving our existing airport infrastructure, including upgrading transport connections. We are acting on those interim recommendations. We are working with Gatwick airport to upgrade the station there; Network Rail is leading a study to improve the rail link between London and Stansted; and Crossrail will soon provide a new direct route to Heathrow.

The Commission has also sought views from across the country because the UK’s other airports, such as Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol, Newcastle, Edinburgh and Glasgow, play a big role in our aviation success story. Connectivity to all parts of the UK is something that the commission has rightly considered.

The UK has the third-largest aviation network in the world after the United States and China, but it is congested and a lack of capacity holds our country back. Since 1990, 12 UK airports have lost their direct links to Heathrow. As Sir Howard Davies says in his foreword to the report:

“Good aviation connectivity is vital for the UK economy. It promotes trade and inward investment.”

The report states:

“About half of the British population has travelled by air within the last twelve months.”

It also states:

“While London remains a well-connected city its airports are showing unambiguous signs of strain.”

Meanwhile, hub airports such as Dubai and Istanbul are growing fast.

The commission found that all three shortlisted schemes were credible options for expansion, but that the Heathrow airport north-west runway scheme offered the strongest solution. According to the report,

“Heathrow offers a stronger solution to the UK’s aviation capacity and connectivity needs than a second runway at Gatwick.”

The report recommends action to address the impact of any expansion on the local environment and community. The recommended action includes a limit on night flights, greater compensation, controls on air quality, and a guarantee that there will be no fourth runway.

Let me turn to the Government’s response. There are a number of things that we must do now in order to make progress. First, we must study the substantial and innovative evidence base that the commission has produced. Secondly, we must decide on the best way of achieving planning consents quickly and fairly if expansion is to go ahead. Thirdly, we will come back to Parliament in the autumn to provide a clear direction on the Government’s plans.

This is a vital moment for the future of our aviation industry. Our aviation sector has been at the heart of our economic success and quality of life. All those with an interest in this important question are expecting us to act decisively. This is a clear and reasoned report which is based on evidence, and it deserves respect and consideration, and we must act. I commend my statement to the House.

12.41 pm

[Michael Dugher \(Barnsley East\) \(Lab\):](#)

I thank the Secretary of State for giving me advance sight of his fairly brief statement, and I join him in thanking Sir Howard Davies and his team for the vital work that they have done since 2012 in producing what is a very important report. I also pay tribute to both Heathrow and Gatwick for the impressive campaigns that they have run.

The report constitutes a substantial piece of evidence-led work. Sir Howard Davies has proceeded in a calm, open and assured manner throughout, and we welcome the fact that he has now produced a clear recommendation. The report states:

“A new Northwest Runway at Heathrow delivers more substantial economic and strategic benefits than any of the other shortlisted options, strengthening connectivity for passengers and freight users and boosting the productivity of the UK economy.”

It also states that the recommendation is

“a fundamentally different proposition from previous proposals to expand at Heathrow.”

Sir Howard Davies added this morning:

“The proposal in place then was a deficient proposal; it did not offer the economic advantages of this proposal.”

As the Secretary of State has said, aviation plays a massive role in our economy, and has the potential to play an even greater role in the future. The sector employs hundreds of thousands of people, contributes more than £50 billion to our GDP, and pays the Exchequer more than £8 billion in tax every year. However, as we know, the ongoing growth of our aviation sector is now at risk. Heathrow has been full for 10 years, and Gatwick is set to reach capacity within the next five.

A decision on aviation expansion should have been made many years ago. That was a failure on the part of all previous Governments, but failing to act this time is not an option. Just a few weeks ago, a report by the Independent Transport Commission revealed that if a decision was put off yet again, we would face a significant loss in productivity and inward investment, with the UK economy potentially losing up to £214 billion over the next 60 years. The evidence is clear: more airport capacity is vital to our economic success, and we need action if we are to maintain our status as Europe’s most important aviation hub.

As I have said, the report is a significant and substantial piece of work, and, like the Government, we will take an appropriate period of time to analyse and scrutinise its findings carefully; but will the Secretary of State assure me that, if the report and Heathrow can demonstrate that the main recommendation meets a number of key tests, the Government will make a swift decision to proceed? Those tests include, first, that there is robust and convincing evidence that the increased aviation capacity that is required will be delivered by Sir Howard’s recommendation; secondly, that the recommended expansion in capacity can go hand-in-hand with efforts to reduce CO₂ emissions from aviation and allow us to meet our legal climate change obligations, which is absolutely crucial; thirdly, that local noise and environmental impacts have been adequately considered and will be managed and minimised; and fourthly, that the benefits of expansion will be felt in every corner of the country, including any infrastructure, employment and supply-chain benefits, and that regional airports will be supported, too.

The public and businesses across the UK have been clear that they do not want any further dither or delay. Can the Secretary of State reassure the House that, no matter how tempted the Government might be, he will not kick this into the long grass? The short-term interests of the Conservative party must not take priority over what is in the best long-term interests of the country.

This is the biggest decision for UK plc this decade. The message from the Labour Benches is clear: we will study the report carefully and, if our key tests are met, we will back the report and a decision that is in the long-term interests of the country. I know there are profoundly difficult issues within the Conservative party on this issue. The Secretary of State has my deepest sympathies, as always, but there is a majority in the House of Commons willing to do the right thing by the country. The Government will have our support, but they must make the right decision—and they must make it quickly.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his response. It was calmer than the response I usually get from him on transport issues.

[Michael Dugher:](#)

Business as usual next week.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I do not think I will have to wait that long.

The hon. Gentleman says that there are difficulties on the Conservative Benches, with colleagues having strong views, but I beg that he looks just behind him, because certain of his colleagues oppose an expansion of airports, not least one of the leading contenders for the nomination of Labour candidate for London Mayor, the right hon. Member for Tooting (Sadiq Khan), who said this morning:

“This is a bad decision. All Londoners should know if I’m elected mayor I will do everything in my power to stop this health and environmental catastrophe blighting London.”

Rather than trying to make it seem as though there is opposition just on the Conservative Benches, the hon. Gentleman and other Members should recognise the very big concerns that a number of people have and will have on any expansion of major infrastructure. That is something that I have been always careful to do as Secretary of State for Transport, whether in dealing with this subject or other subjects that cause local people a lot of inconvenience. Sometimes a scheme is basically unacceptable to them. I assure him that we will study the Davies report in great detail. It is a very good, well researched report. I will come back and inform the House further later this year.

[Sir Simon Burns \(Chelmsford\) \(Con\):](#)

Will my right hon. Friend confirm, so that there can be no misunderstanding, that although this is a report to the Government, they are not necessarily bound by its recommendations?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am grateful to my right hon. Friend for his question. As I said earlier, Sir Howard has come forward with the report. We have to consider all the implications of that. It is up to the promoters of these schemes to speak to the local residents who are most directly affected to see whether they can achieve consensus on what they want and what they will accept.

[Drew Hendry \(Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey\) \(SNP\):](#)

I thank the Secretary of State for the early sight of the airports commission report and confirm that there are no problems on the Scottish National party Benches with this. I thank Sir Howard and his team for their work.

The report, while continuing to keep Gatwick as a “viable option”, provides a clear direction. All those involved would expect clarity from the Secretary of State on his position as soon as possible. People should not have to wait until the autumn for the Government’s view. Indeed, the Prime Minister suggested today that the wait could be even longer. There is a huge amount at stake for everyone who may be affected.

For too long, in common with other parts of the UK, Scotland has not had its needs addressed in relation to the provision of fair pricing, sustainable landing slots and the power to reduce or remove air passenger duty. We hope the decisions taken will finally provide a fairer deal for Scotland’s people and one that will provide a significant boost to our economy.

In line with the report's recommendations, will the Secretary of State confirm that there will be substantially more support on connectivity for long-haul to and from Scotland? Further, will he confirm that such connections will be put on a statutory basis? Will he also guarantee that internal route connections to Scotland will be given permanence through public service orders, to remove the "Here today, gone tomorrow" service so often suffered by the Scottish public?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I thank the hon. Gentleman for his points. I take it that there is no division whatever in the SNP on Sir Howard's proposals, although I may wait a little and see how the debate develops. The hon. Gentleman is right about regional connectivity and the slots needed by Scottish airports and other airports that have lost them, and I hope we can address that. I want to reflect on that point while considering the whole report.

[Zac Goldsmith \(Richmond Park\) \(Con\):](#)

It is disappointing to hear the Opposition dismiss the concerns as being about the internal problems of a political party. Heathrow is already the biggest noise polluter in Europe, and increasing that by 50% will only make the problem worse.

The Airports Commission raises air quality as an issue. My view is that there is not a single air quality expert or organisation anywhere in this country or Europe, or indeed the world, who believes we can reconcile Heathrow expansion with any air quality targets. If that is the case, I presume that the Government's decision is very, very easy?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am not entirely sure that I agree with my hon. Friend that the decision is very easy, but he has been very open in the points he makes, the way in which he has campaigned and his own position on Heathrow expansion. He will be able to make those representations in the same way that other Members may make other representations.

[Mrs Louise Ellman \(Liverpool, Riverside\) \(Lab/Co-op\):](#)

I welcome the Davies commission's recommendation for Heathrow, which follows the findings of the Select Committee on Transport in its detailed report published two years ago. Does the Secretary of State agree that now is the time for a swift decision, with the key national decision to be based on the importance of connectivity both to international markets and the regions of the UK?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I have outlined the way in which the Government will come to their decision. On such a big issue, coming back to the House by the autumn constitutes a swift decision.

[Mr Kenneth Clarke \(Rushcliffe\) \(Con\):](#)

I accept that my right hon. Friend's duty, both in law and following good governance, is to study the report carefully and to consider respectfully every one of the representations that will come from every quarter, particularly from those who represent home counties constituencies. Does he agree, however, that the Government were elected to deliver a modern, competitive economy for future

generations, and that in the end decisions on major infrastructure projects—fracking or whatever else—should be taken on a clear judgment of the national interest of the country as a whole? As he is a fellow representative of what the Minister for Small Business, Industry and Enterprise, my right hon. Friend the Member for Broxtowe (Anna Soubry), calls the midlands machine, I hope he will confirm that that will be his guiding principle in reaching his conclusion.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

In all my time in the House of Commons, I have always found it much easier to agree with my right hon. and learned Friend on such issues. He makes a number of points that we must bear in mind, and it is in a way a pity that progress has not been made on some of these subjects sooner.

[John McDonnell \(Hayes and Harlington\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Secretary of State started his statement by outlining the history, beginning with the Davies commission. There was a stage before that, however, when the right hon. Member for Witney (Mr Cameron)—now the Prime Minister—said to my constituents, “No ifs, no buts, there will be no third runway.” Now, 10,000 of them are at risk of losing their homes, their local community centres, their schools and their places of worship. Today the air pollution levels were double the EU legal limits. If the runway goes ahead, the noise will extend to 1.5 million people. Does the Secretary of State think the onus is now on the Prime Minister to come to my constituency and meet my constituents whose homes and whole community are now at risk?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

What the Prime Minister was talking about initially was a proposal put forward by his own party, which was basically not a proper proposal and would not have answered the capacity question. The Prime Minister certainly ruled out that option, and set up the commission so that we could make a reasoned and proper judgment, which is exactly what we will do.

[Sir Nicholas Soames \(Mid Sussex\) \(Con\):](#)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that Sir Howard Davies has produced a serious and extremely important piece of work and that he deserves the credit of the whole House? Does he also agree that what Sir Howard has done is go overseas to check best practice and make sure his proposal is fortified by such calculations? Does my right hon. Friend further agree that what matters is that this decision is taken solely in the national interest, as my right hon. and learned Friend the Member for Rushcliffe (Mr Clarke) said?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Indeed, and the commission points out that all three of the options are well worth considering.

[Caroline Lucas \(Brighton, Pavilion\) \(Green\):](#)

A new runway at Heathrow would blight the lives of thousands as well as increasing climate emissions, yet new research shows that a small number of very wealthy people flying very regularly—not families taking an annual holiday—is driving demand. Will the Secretary of State agree to look seriously at a new proposal for a frequent flyer levy as a way of tackling the health and environmental impacts of growing aviation?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

In fact, Sir Howard suggests in his report that there should be an extra levy particularly to compensate people who are affected by noise, so those who fly more frequently would pay more towards that levy. It is also worth pointing out to the hon. Lady that, as I said in my statement, half the population used a plane last year.

[Sir Roger Gale \(North Thanet\) \(Con\):](#)

Any courageous and difficult decision that the Government make will take time to implement. My right hon. Friend has already indicated that the UK is losing business to overseas airports. Does he agree that it is desirable and possible for airports such as Manston in Kent to be used immediately to relieve the pressure on Heathrow and other airports while the long-term decisions are being taken?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I did not think that my hon. Friend would miss out on the opportunity to mention Manston airport. The commission looked at more than 50 proposals in coming to its recommendations, and it is those recommendations that the Government are now considering.

[Fiona Mactaggart \(Slough\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Secretary of State referred in his statement to surface transport improvements to our airports, but did not refer to western rail access to Heathrow. Is he still committed to that, and does he agree with the Davies commission, which says:

“Further delay will be increasingly costly and will be seen, nationally and internationally, as a sign that the UK is unwilling or unable to take the steps needed to maintain its position as a well-connected open trading economy in the twenty first century”?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I think the right hon. Lady has managed to read the first part of the report, but it goes into a lot more detail on some of the proposals—I fully accept that she has not yet had time to consider all of that, and neither have I. I will say, however, that the connectivity and the connections up to Crossrail will make a huge difference to Heathrow, and the western rail access will be one thing that Sir Peter Hendy, in his new role of chairman of Network Rail, will be looking at.

[Sir Alan Haselhurst \(Saffron Walden\) \(Con\):](#)

Will my right hon. Friend pay particular attention to the contradiction at the heart of Sir Howard’s recommendation: that London’s ostensibly hub airport should have a third runway but not a fourth? Does that not add emphasis to the need, as part of the northern powerhouse, for a major airport development there?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I realise that my right hon. Friend has not had time to read the whole report—as I have said, I have not managed to read it all yet either—but I draw his attention to page 34, where it says:

“If new capacity was found to be necessary and feasible, a wide range of options should be considered. This could include airports previously assessed as part of the Commission process, for example Stansted and Gatwick, and airports outside London and the South East, such as at Birmingham or Manchester.”

I have been very keen to ensure that airports outside London such as Birmingham and Manchester play a full role in the aviation availability for the country.

[Jim Fitzpatrick \(Poplar and Limehouse\) \(Lab\):](#)

When the right hon. Gentleman was appointed, it was taken as a signal that the Government—certainly the Conservative part of the coalition—were having a fresh look at aviation capacity, because his predecessor, who does a great job as International Development Secretary, had campaigned against any capacity increase. Will he assure the House that as Transport Secretary he will act as an advocate for the Davies recommendations within Government?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Many interpretations were put on why I might have got the job in 2012, so I will leave the hon. Gentleman’s interpretation to his own imagination.

[Dr Tania Mathias \(Twickenham\) \(Con\):](#)

When the Secretary of State is looking at this report over the summer, will he pay particular attention to pages 289 and 290, and think about my constituents? There is talk of mitigation and compensation, but there is already too much noise pollution and, as has been said, the air pollution this morning is twice what it should be. Will he acknowledge that that there is no alleviation possible for Twickenham residents? Page 290 refers to the issue, but I do not want all our schools having fancy little pods in the playground because the noise pollution is too much for the children.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I know that my hon. Friend will want to make those points to me. She will want to look at the whole report in detail, although she has done a fairly good job by getting up to page 289 already, and I will want to look carefully at the points she makes. As I say, in part of the recommendations there is talk of a new levy on passengers so that some noise insulation and better noise insulation could be provided, as well as mitigation, particularly for some schools. I know that this issue is a particular problem in her constituency.

[Sadiq Khan \(Tooting\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Transport Secretary will be aware that the commission recommends but the Government decide. The Government will be aware that London’s air quality has been getting worse and worse. A few weeks ago, the Supreme Court ruled that the quality of air in London was unlawful. The impact of noise is felt during the day as well as during the night, making the lives of thousands of people in London a misery. The local infrastructure cannot cope at the moment, let alone in the future. We all want jobs and growth, so will he seriously look at plans to expand Gatwick to create additional capacity and have a high-speed link between Heathrow and Gatwick, so that we could have jobs and growth without causing the misery that the third runway would cause?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Of course we will be looking at all those things before we come to a final decision, but I believe that when the right hon. Gentleman was a Transport Minister he supported a third runway.

[Mr Andrew Mitchell \(Sutton Coldfield\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend is handling this matter with great wisdom and has rightly praised the excellent report that Sir Howard Davies has completed, with its compelling and well-written argument. My right hon. Friend will be aware that the taxpayer has invested £20 million in this report, which is absolutely critical to our future economic well-being. To govern is to choose, so will he make the right decision as quickly as possible and bring it back to this House as soon as he can?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I have outlined exactly the scenario that the Government are going to follow, and when I come back to the House I hope that I can count on my right hon. Friend's support.

[Mr Nigel Dodds \(Belfast North\) \(DUP\):](#)

The Secretary of State referred to the role that other UK airports play in our aviation success story, and I am sure he would want to add Belfast City and Belfast International to the list. For us, regional connectivity is key; the air links between London and Belfast are vital to grow our economy. The prospect of 5,000 new jobs in Northern Ireland alone as a result of this proposal is very welcome, but will he look carefully at the issue of guaranteed slots at Heathrow for Northern Ireland, because it is essential for our economy that those slots are maintained and indeed increased?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

That follows on, in a way, from the points made by the Scottish National party earlier about the importance of slots available to airports, not just in Scotland, but in Northern Ireland. When I appeared before the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs in the previous Parliament that was one of the important issues its members wished to raise with me, and obviously we will want to consider it.

[Mr Dominic Grieve \(Beaconsfield\) \(Con\):](#)

Will my right hon. Friend look carefully at the Howard Davies proposals? If there is to be expansion at Heathrow, one key issue is that there must be environmental benefits for the surrounding area, which has been adversely affected by the operation of Heathrow for decades. I suspect that my constituents would have mixed views on the expansion of Heathrow, but one key issue for those who live closest to it is the extent to which their quality of life deteriorates because of heavy goods vehicle movements, congested roads, car parks and grubby and ill-controlled activities, which are probably far more deleterious to their standard of living than the noise from the aircraft themselves? [Laughter.]

[Mr Speaker:](#)

I call the Secretary of State, on grubby and ill-controlled activities.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

That might need to be a private conversation with my right hon. and learned Friend outside the Chamber. However, I will appreciate the point he makes and I would want to see those sorts of issues addressed. As he rightly points out, local residents have had to put up with them for a considerable time.

[Huw Irranca-Davies \(Ogmore\) \(Lab\):](#)

This is perhaps the classic conundrum of sustainable development, with the Government and the country caught between an economic rock and an environmental hard place. The Environmental Audit Committee will want to examine it in detail when considering the report. What are the Secretary of State's initial thoughts on the report's conclusion in paragraph 9.120 that Gatwick performs "best" on minimising carbon emissions, and on paragraphs 9.92 and 9.93, which make clear

"the Commission's objective to improve air quality consistent with EU standards and local planning policy requirements"

and that the scheme

"could, without mitigation, exceed the Air Quality Directive limit values and delay compliance with the EU limit value for the Greater London agglomeration"?

I do not envy the Secretary of State's decision and the country's decision, but we need to get this right in terms of those stringent warnings.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I congratulate the hon. Gentleman on being elected Chairman of the Environmental Audit Committee; he has probably just shown us why. I am sure that that Committee, along with the Transport Committee and other Committees of the House, will want to look at these issues and cross-question both me and other people on their implications.

[Sir Paul Beresford \(Mole Valley\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend will not be too surprised to hear that I am fully supportive of Sir Howard's position, particularly as I recognise the huge economic benefits of Heathrow over the somewhat weak plan for Gatwick. Will my right hon. Friend reflect on his points about speeding up the process? He was one of the Ministers responsible on HS1 and is now watching HS2 creep down the railway tracks. Once he has made his decision, which we hope will be the sensible decision for Heathrow, will he speed up the rest of the procedure, even if we have to remove, with a forklift truck, our friend who is currently Mayor of London?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I think we are making good progress on HS2, but there have been delays on large infrastructure projects. I would like to see a consensus build on some of these issues, but it is very difficult.

[Seema Malhotra \(Feltham and Heston\) \(Lab/Co-op\):](#)

My constituents are very divided on this issue, not least because thousands of households depend on Heathrow for employment but are also very affected by noise and by air pollution. One area where there is unity is on the need for the future of Heathrow to be secured. Will the Secretary of State rule out today any future proposal by the hon. Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) that we should close Heathrow and that there should be a Thames estuary island, or any other similar measure?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Those things were looked at by the commission. It produced its report and recommendations and it is on that report and those recommendations that the Government will take action.

[Mr Graham Brady \(Altrincham and Sale West\) \(Con\):](#)

I welcome the clear recognition that Britain needs a hub airport at the end of this process. This debate has raged for more than 50 years. I urge my right hon. Friend to ensure that he is the Secretary of State who brings it to a conclusion.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am grateful to my hon. Friend for his support. I have outlined the way in which we will address what the commission has said, and I look forward to coming back to the House later this year.

[Dr Rupa Huq \(Ealing Central and Acton\) \(Lab\):](#)

My hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) has already mentioned the 2009 “no ifs, no buts” statement, which I am beginning to think was made with an eye more on marginal seats on the flight path, such as my own, than on anything else. However, what I really want to ask the Minister is this: how many Cabinet resignations does he predict if the Davies recommendations are enacted?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I expect to be able to have good conversations with all my colleagues right across the House on what is a very important infrastructure project for the United Kingdom.

[Jeremy Quin \(Horsham\) \(Con\):](#)

As the Secretary of State said in his statement, the commission has taken views from right across the United Kingdom. Sir Howard said this morning that those views, including those from Scotland and Northern Ireland, were firmly and overwhelmingly in favour of Heathrow. I assume that that will be taken into account in his consideration of the report.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

We will be looking at the whole report. As Sir Howard said, the three options to be considered are all viable ones.

[Tom Brake \(Carshalton and Wallington\) \(LD\):](#)

Today, on what promises to be the hottest day of the year, many of my constituents will be enjoying their gardens. Will the Secretary of State confirm, no ifs, no buts, that they will be able to continue to enjoy that amenity in years to come and that their lives will not be blighted by increased noise and reduced air quality as a result of any decisions that he will make later on this year?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Let me gently chide the right hon. Gentleman. The no ifs, no buts matter was something that he signed up to when the previous Government commissioned Sir Howard to compile this report, because the decision commanded the support of the whole Government at the time. Certainly, we must address the whole issue of noise pollution and other pollution in this report. That is one of the things that Sir Howard Davies has done. It is one of the reasons why the commission was broadly based, and actually had a member of the Committee on Climate Change as one of the commissioners.

[Henry Smith \(Crawley\) \(Con\):](#)

I welcome the publication of the Airports Commission report. It reached the best conclusion, independently arrived at, for both economic growth nationally—for this great trading nation—and this great global city of London. I also welcome my right hon. Friend's commitment to come to a swift decision this calendar year on the future and final option. May I also seek assurances that the ministerial code will apply in this decision?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I can definitely confirm that the ministerial code will apply to all Ministers in the way in which we deal with this issue over the next few months.

[Mr David Lammy \(Tottenham\) \(Lab\):](#)

In looking at the report over the coming months, will the Secretary of State consider the livelihoods of many in the UK—the 190,000 potential jobs, the 76,000 livelihoods of those currently working at Heathrow and the 10,000 apprenticeships—and not just the livelihoods of the hon. Members for Uxbridge and South Ruislip (Boris Johnson) and for Richmond Park (Zac Goldsmith)?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The right hon. Gentleman had a good question there, but spoiled it at the end. As I have already said, there are other mayoral candidates from the Labour party who have a similar position to that of my hon. Friend, the present Mayor of London. That is an issue that we shall consider and take forward.

[Mark Menzies \(Fylde\) \(Con\):](#)

May I add my congratulations on the recommendations in the Davies report and the clear indication that a third runway is required at Heathrow? As a north-west MP, may I seek assurances from the Secretary of State that north-west connectivity will only continue to improve as a result of this decision?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Those are the issues that we will have to address. I am sure that the Transport Committee will want to review them at some stage as well, and I know that my hon. Friend is about to join that Committee.

[Barry Gardiner \(Brent North\) \(Lab\):](#)

The increase in carbon emissions from any airport expansion will have to be contained within the overall carbon budget set by the Committee on Climate Change. What discussions is the Secretary of State having in Cabinet about offsetting from other areas of his portfolio to ensure that those emissions caps are not breached; and what discussions is he having at European level to ensure that a European emissions cap is put in place, as this country has unsuccessfully argued for previously?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

We regard our obligations under the Climate Change Act 2008 very seriously indeed, and we tried to reflect that when we set up the airports commission and made Dame Julia King a member. That is certainly something that the commission has addressed in its work.

[Dr Phillip Lee \(Bracknell\) \(Con\):](#)

I thank the Secretary of State for his statement. As a long-term public supporter of Heathrow expansion, I have already welcomed the Davies commission findings. Will he consider, as soon as possible, giving the National Air Traffic Services a statutory responsibility to mitigate noise? NATS currently does not have that responsibility, the consequence of which is that holding patterns, approach and take-off from Heathrow are unnecessarily noisy. Will he also consider allowing Heathrow airport to fine airlines if they use old planes that are particularly noisy, and if their pilots are unnecessarily noisy when they fly planes in and out of Heathrow?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I will certainly consider those points. One recommendation is to have an independent noise commission, which would partly address my hon. Friend's points. He is right to point out the great advances that have been made by the aircraft manufacturers in reducing noise levels from planes. I know that a lot of work continues to be done in that area.

[Graham Stringer \(Blackley and Broughton\) \(Lab\):](#)

Implementing these proposals quickly is clearly in the national interest, and I support the proposals. It has never been in the national interest that such a disproportionate amount of public money has gone into capital expenditure on transport in the south-east of England. Will the Secretary of State reassure the House that the necessary capital works—paid from the public purse—to support a third runway at Heathrow will not disadvantage the north of England and the other regions of this country?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I agree with the hon. Gentleman that the proposals should be implemented quickly, but they should be implemented quickly and properly and with the proper procedures. The whole process would be slowed down dramatically if we were to be challenged in the courts, and to lose, but he makes a good point about investment in transport infrastructure across the United Kingdom. I am proud of

the Government's record and of our plans for investment right across the country, including the northern powerhouse.

[Kelly Tolhurst \(Rochester and Strood\) \(Con\):](#)

Will my right hon. Friend confirm that now we have these recommendations, the people of my constituency, particularly on the Isle of Grain, can be assured that there will no longer be an airport proposal for the Hoo peninsula and that it is finally off the table?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I think that I said to my hon. Friend when I was in her constituency a few months ago that that was one of the 50 proposals that was considered by the commission, but it has now been ruled out. What we have today are the three proposals that the commission has endorsed.

[Phil Wilson \(Sedgefield\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Secretary of State quite rightly mentioned Newcastle airport in his list of regional airports in his statement. As he is probably aware, there is another regional airport in the north-east of England, which is Durham Tees Valley airport. Part of the runway runs through the constituency of the hon. Member for Stockton South (James Wharton), the Minister with responsibility for the northern powerhouse. It is imperative that we have connectivity to Heathrow. We have it with Schiphol, but there are not so many destinations from there as there are from Heathrow. We really need a quick and positive decision on this matter to ensure that the economy in the north-east grows in the future.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

It would have been wrong of me to try to read out every single airport in the country that would want such connectivity, and I apologise to the hon. Gentleman for not mentioning his airport. I have tried not to call these airports regional airports: they are airports that serve their local communities incredibly well.

[Mr Ranil Jayawardena \(North East Hampshire\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend rightly referenced the growth of airports such as Dubai and Istanbul. Does he agree that that demonstrates the challenge we face in maintaining our status as a global aviation hub? Does he further agree that we should make a decision sooner rather than later in the interests of our international competitiveness?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

My hon. Friend is absolutely right. I referenced those two airports in my statement, but others are trying to get the advantage that they see the United Kingdom has. We must ensure that they do not get that advantage.

[Andy Slaughter \(Hammersmith\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Secretary of State and Sir Howard can go on all they like about mitigating the effects of a third runway at Heathrow, but for hundreds of thousands of Londoners it just means more noise,

pollution and congestion. What is the Secretary of State's message for them, and will he answer, as he has not so far, the question about what the Prime Minister meant when he said that a third runway at Heathrow was not going ahead, no ifs, no buts?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

He was talking about the proposal at the time, which the hon. Gentleman supported—

[Andy Slaughter](#)

indicated dissent.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Perhaps he was not a Member, but his party supported that proposal in government. We asked Sir Howard to consider and address some of these issues, which is what he has done. Some of the changes that he would make as far as the noise and the levy on passengers are concerned are very important. As I say, the report has three options and we are considering all three.

[Mark Garnier \(Wyre Forest\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend the Chancellor the Exchequer has made clear this Government's commitment to regional economic development through his announcement of the northern powerhouse. Although I note the comments on page 34 of the report about Birmingham and other airports, does my right hon. Friend not agree that this is potentially a wasted opportunity to promote not only regional economic growth but sectoral economic growth, such as the great manufacturing sector of the midlands?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am sorry that my hon. Friend so easily dismisses page 34, which I would have thought gives him and the people who run Birmingham airport, which he has spoken about in the House on occasion, some encouragement. Those airports—Birmingham, Manchester, and Tees, just to ensure I get them all right and do not upset anybody—are all incredibly important for people around those areas and we want more flights from them.

[Valerie Vaz \(Walsall South\) \(Lab\):](#)

I echo what my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher) says, but Birmingham international stands ready for expansion with international flights to JFK in New York and Beijing that are cheaper than from Heathrow. Will the Secretary of State seriously take into account the fact that Birmingham has a strategic position in the UK and its connectivity to HS2?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Yes, I will certainly take that seriously. The hon. Lady will know that the recent runway expansion at Birmingham has been very important in trying to attract more business and offer more opportunities to fly to other destinations. She is absolutely right about how important HS2 will be for that airport.

[Nick Herbert \(Arundel and South Downs\) \(Con\):](#)

Has not the commission made an unequivocal recommendation, finding that Gatwick would deliver fewer benefits—half the economic benefits of Heathrow—has poorer transport links, especially to the north, and, crucially, would not deliver the hub solution that this country needs? In taking a decision swiftly, will the Secretary of State be mindful of the fact that it might be inconsistent to talk about a long-term economic plan and the national economic interest while going for a suboptimal solution that has not been recommended by the commission?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I think my right hon. Friend is trying to prejudge the decisions we will take. I shall not get caught in that trap. We will consider all parts of the report and I assure him that we are committed to seeing the United Kingdom and its long-term economic plan grow and succeed.

[Ms Diane Abbott \(Hackney North and Stoke Newington\) \(Lab\):](#)

The Davies commission report will clearly repay close study. The economic benefits of the third runway at Heathrow are understood, but does the Secretary of State appreciate that for millions of people, including millions of Londoners, the economic benefits are outweighed by the clear environmental disbenefits, such as carbon emissions, noise, and, above all, air pollution?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am grateful to the hon. Lady. She is absolutely right and she mentions some of the considerations that we must seriously take on board. There is no easy answer, which is slightly different from what was said from the Opposition Dispatch Box at the start of the statement.

[Mr David Nuttall \(Bury North\) \(Con\):](#)

Although London Heathrow might be operating at virtually full capacity, Manchester airport is not. Whatever is decided, it will clearly be many years before new capacity becomes available in the south east, so will the Secretary of State look into ways of helping Manchester airport to attract new operators and groups to Manchester?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Manchester did get its extra runway. My hon. Friend is absolutely right: I want more services to be available to the public from airports outside London.

[Mr Gareth Thomas \(Harrow West\) \(Lab/Co-op\):](#)

With 40,000 of the extra jobs that a third runway would generate set to be in London, and given that Sir Howard Davies has looked in detail at the environmental concerns that were raised with him and is clear that they can be addressed, quite apart from the national interest, will the Secretary of State accept that it is certainly in London's interest for a third runway to go ahead?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Like others, the hon. Gentleman is tempting me to prejudge the Government's consideration of the report. The simple point is that, as he will have heard from various other Opposition Members, there

are other considerations to take into account. I shall not therefore prejudge the decision we shall take.

[Jason McCartney \(Colne Valley\) \(Con\):](#)

Does my right hon. Friend agree that if the whole of the United Kingdom and, in particular, my constituents in Yorkshire are to benefit from these ambitious airport expansion plans, we need good conductivity, which means a good rail network with modern rolling stock and electrification?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Yes, I do. I am very proud of the huge investment in this Parliament, with £38.5 billion being spent on upgrading our railway network. I am very pleased to say that under this Government the Pacers will stop running in my hon. Friend's constituency and will be replaced with better trains, which never happened under the previous Government.

[Mr Clive Betts \(Sheffield South East\) \(Lab\):](#)

I am sure that the Secretary of State agrees that we need extra airport capacity. We also need a major hub airport in this country. Will he agree that, for connectivity to the north, locating capacity and that hub several miles to the south of London would be completely illogical?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The hon. Gentleman, who has been in this place for a fair amount of time, tries another little trick to get me to prejudge what I have said several times I will not prejudge—nice try, but he failed.

[Mr Laurence Robertson \(Tewkesbury\) \(Con\):](#)

I welcome the Secretary of State's commitment to moving this issue on as quickly as possible for the sake of connectivity, the economy and the loss of business we are suffering. When he considers the local factors in west London, which he must do, will he consider the fact that Heathrow is geographically situated very conveniently for the majority of people and that if they were forced to travel further that would add to congestion and air quality problems?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I think I might have to refer my hon. Friend to the reply I gave just a few minutes ago. Again, he tries to get me to prejudge where we are on this issue, and I am not prepared to do that.

[Mr Virendra Sharma \(Ealing, Southall\) \(Lab\):](#)

We have heard quite a lot about the balance between jobs and the environment. We have already spoken about further investments in roads and transport, but there are many schools and families under the flight path. I hope that the Secretary of State will take account of the future of those generations, whose education will be disturbed by noise and other pollution, whenever the final decision is made.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Yes, I understand exactly where the hon. Gentleman is coming from, and it is interesting that in the report Sir Howard and the commission talk about a noise levy to be paid by passengers, with the money being spent on things to alleviate noise. In fact, new modern planes are not as noisy as some of the older ones that are still flying.

[Caroline Ansell \(Eastbourne\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend will know of the strength of support for Gatwick's second runway in my constituency of Eastbourne and Willingdon and across East Sussex from every chamber of commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses—connectivity is so important for coastal communities such as mine. He highlighted in his statement capacity and connectivity in relation to the Heathrow proposal, but will he confirm that deliverability and affordability, where Gatwick arguably has the stronger case, will also be at the heart of decision making?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Again, my hon. Friend points out some of the other things that we need to take into account when reaching a conclusion and returning to the House later this year to set out the proposals that we wish to follow. Deliverability will be an important consideration for us.

[Clive Efford \(Eltham\) \(Lab\):](#)

Will the Secretary of State undertake to return with specific and binding proposals for the air industry on emissions and minimising noise pollution when he announces his final conclusions?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

That will be part of the issues that we want to address. We will look particularly at how Sir Howard and the commission have said that the issues can be addressed. As we heard in earlier questions, that will be debated by the Environmental Audit Committee and other Committees between now and the Government reaching a conclusion.

[Iain Stewart \(Milton Keynes South\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend has a strong track record for acting in the long-term, strategic interests of transport infrastructure. To help him to reach a bold and swift decision, may I direct him to page 76 of the report, which points out the £5 billion cost of delays if we do not take a decision? Is there not also an environmental cost of not acting, given that capacity constraints cause planes to stack in ever-increasing numbers over London?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am grateful to my hon. Friend. I am quickly looking at page 76, which he drew my attention to. I can assure him that we will go through all these points, but he is absolutely right: a plane stacked over London is neither economic nor good for the environment.

[Jim Shannon \(Strangford\) \(DUP\):](#)

In 2015, Belfast City airport has returned to solid growth across all business sectors. Nine flights leave Belfast City airport for Heathrow every day—the busiest flights from Northern Ireland. Does

the Secretary of State agree that ensuring that Belfast City airport remains a vital regional hub will bring extra passengers and create more travel and extra revenue as a key priority?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The hon. Gentleman points out that this is a matter of connectivity from London not just to other parts of the world, but to other parts of the United Kingdom. I accept the importance of Heathrow and those services to and from Belfast.

[Mr Nigel Evans \(Ribble Valley\) \(Con\):](#)

I do not want the Secretary of State for Transport to prejudge the commission's report—I just want him to get on with it. He said he hopes for some consensus. I hate to break the bad news to him: it is simply not going to happen. Many businesses in Ribble Valley use Manchester airport and will be grateful for what he has said about it, but a lot of them connect to London and flights to about 40 new destinations will be available once airport capacity is expanded. Please will he—gently—get on with it?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

My hon. Friend started by saying that he will not ask me to prejudge but urged me to make a decision here at the Dispatch Box. The answer to the first part of his question is no, I will not do that. The answer to the second part of his question, which relates to the importance of connectivity and Manchester airport, is that I accept it.

[Mary Glindon \(North Tyneside\) \(Lab\):](#)

According to the report, 60% of the benefits of Heathrow will be delivered outside London and the south-east, so will the Secretary of State support the call from Newcastle international airport not only to make a quick decision in favour of Heathrow, but to put in place the steps necessary to deliver this crucial project?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The hon. Lady points out that this issue is important not just for London but for the whole United Kingdom. We need to reflect that in our deliberations on the subject.

[Geoffrey Clifton-Brown \(The Cotswolds\) \(Con\):](#)

May I praise Sir Howard Davies for the rigour of his report? Although I do not expect my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State to make a decision, will he expedite the many processes that this airport has to go through, so that we actually get a runway built and the UK can compete in the 21st century?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

My hon. Friend is correct, but we have a process that we need to go through. We do need to abide by that process. If we did not, we would simply find ourselves judicially reviewed in the courts and the whole process would take a lot longer.

[Mike Kane \(Wythenshawe and Sale East\) \(Lab\):](#)

I welcome the Secretary of State's view that the Davies recommendation is not a missed opportunity to use the UK's runway capacity to the full, but I put it to him that he is contemplating staggeringly massive public sector subsidies to a western rail link, to the infrastructure work on runway 3 and to the completion of Crossrail, while pulling Leeds-Manchester electrification and midland main line electrification. He has to square that because those two projects would drive traffic to Manchester airport in my constituency.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman thinks that we are pulling those projects. I have put that electrification on pause. I want the costs to be looked at. I do not want a repeat of what happened when the last Labour Government started the upgrade of the west coast main line: it was estimated at £2 billion, turned out at £9 billion and did not lead to the changes we needed. I am very proud of what we are doing with the northern powerhouse, and I am very pleased that this Government will actually see the abolition of the Pacers that serve his constituency and the rest of the northern area, too. If this statement was not just on aviation, I could roll out a number of other improvements that we are making to support the northern powerhouse, and I would have thought that he supported us.

[Karen Lumley \(Redditch\) \(Con\):](#)

Does the Secretary of State agree that today's report will provide a great opportunity for extra investment in Birmingham international airport? Will he congratulate it on its brand-new route to China, which will bring investment to the midlands?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I certainly will congratulate that airport, and I hope to be part of the celebrations for that new service this weekend.

[Bridget Phillipson \(Houghton and Sunderland South\) \(Lab\):](#)

The North East chamber of commerce, Newcastle airport and businesses across the region have made it clear that Heathrow represents the best option for the north-east economy, for jobs and for growth. May I urge the Secretary of State to take into account when reaching this decision the impact on the north-east economy and other regional economies?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The answer to the hon. Lady's question is that we will take those things into consideration in reaching our conclusions.

[Julian Sturdy \(York Outer\) \(Con\):](#)

I hope that my right hon. Friend, who has been on his feet for nearly an hour and has listened to Members from right across the House, understands that London's airport capacity not only affects the south-east but the rest of the country, so may I sing the praises of Leeds Bradford airport? A third runway at Heathrow would more than double demand for travel between Leeds and London in

the next five years, boosting Yorkshire's access to emerging markets, and we must not put that at risk.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I thank my hon. Friend for his representations, which will be taken into account.

[Danny Kinahan \(South Antrim\) \(UUP\):](#)

I welcome today's announcement and all the work that has been done, because it means that Belfast international airport, which is in my constituency, should get a flight and direct route to Heathrow. Yes, we want it quick, but when the Secretary of State considers levies and such things into the future, will he keep in mind that 52% of our passengers disappear down to Dublin because of air passenger duty? Any levy that is put in place might severely hurt the Northern Irish economy.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am grateful to the hon. Gentleman for his representations. Obviously, we have to be aware of that, but also part of a noise levy is considering how to put right the damage and how to try to soften or reduce the effects on those who are most disturbed by the noise. That is the right thing to do.

[Robert Jenrick \(Newark\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend said that the Government asked Sir Howard Davies how the UK could maintain its status as an international aviation hub. If that is the case, there might be a difficult decision ahead for my right hon. Friend. Does he not agree that we do not want to be "an" international aviation hub? London will probably almost always be "an" international aviation hub; we want to be "the" international aviation hub. We want to take on and beat the likes of Paris, Dubai and Amsterdam, for the economy of the future, in which case the choice might be quite simple.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Well, that is another way in which my hon. Friend might be trying to get me to prejudge our conclusions. I have made the point that we are the third largest aviation economy; aviation's contribution to our economy follows that made to the economies of the US and China. I am very aware of how important the industry is to the UK.

[Ruth Cadbury \(Brentford and Isleworth\) \(Lab\):](#)

My constituents, a third of whom are not under the current two flight paths, will be under the flight path towards a third runway at Heathrow, so as you can imagine, Mr Speaker, I am not exactly enthusiastic about the recommendations of the Davies commission, but I agree with the Secretary of State and my hon. Friend the Member for Barnsley East (Michael Dugher), the shadow Secretary of State, on the need for a speedy decision for the good of our economy, our communities in west London and the aviation industry.

In the light of the need for a speedy decision, will the Secretary of State start his analysis by looking at the risk factors in respect of further growth at Heathrow and a third runway being deliverable—the potential further breach of EU air quality legislation and the ability to deliver the carbon

offsetting that other parts of the economy must address? I ask that that be done as a matter of urgency.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

The hon. Lady points out a number of issues that we have to consider and take on board. Those will have to be addressed, and satisfactorily addressed as well.

[Alec Shelbrooke \(Elmet and Rothwell\) \(Con\):](#)

My right hon. Friend has heard representations from around the House on the importance of connectivity from regional airports. For most air travellers, often the most frustrating part is getting airside. Therefore, prompting great relief, British Airways now runs a flight out of Leeds to Heathrow, allowing people to get airside without facing the congestion at Heathrow. However, they cannot run for the early flights in the morning because there simply is not the capacity. I am worried that the report rules out the possibility of further expansion, if needed, with respect to regional airports. With that in mind, will my right hon. Friend, as he considers the Davies report, give serious consideration to other locations such as Stansted to ensure that we have future ongoing capacity, as well as the solution being looked at right now?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I am not sure that the commission has ruled that out. I referred to a chapter in Sir Howard's report, which talks about other airports playing a role and seeing those expand too. The point I would make to my hon. Friend is that one issue that is often raised is the availability of slots into London airports.

[James Morris \(Halesowen and Rowley Regis\) \(Con\):](#)

While I welcome the Secretary of State's statement, will he reassure me, in the context of the decision he will take in the autumn, that in considering the relative merits of the commission's report he will take into account the importance of airports such as Birmingham and regional economies such as the west midlands and the black country?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Yes, indeed. The last time I made a statement on aviation capacity, I think I had more questions about the future of Birmingham airport than any other airport we discussed that day. That is not lost on me.

[Martin Vickers \(Cleethorpes\) \(Con\):](#)

While I welcome the expansion in the south east and recognise that it is important to the national economy, my constituents will also note that it represents further concentration of resources in the south. As we seem to have been doing something of a tour of regional airports during the past hour, I cannot help but mention Humberside, which is located in an area where many international companies are based. Will my right hon. Friend give an absolute assurance that airports such as Humberside will receive the necessary infrastructure to expand the local economy?

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

I visited Humberside airport quite some time ago, when I was last in the Department, so it has been providing a service for many years.

[Ben Howlett \(Bath\) \(Con\):](#)

Thank you for calling me, Mr Speaker. I have been able to cancel my step aerobics class tonight.

I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments on the link to Heathrow airport from the great western main line. Adding to the list of regional airports that we have been talking about, will he commit to looking at Bristol international airport, giving me and my constituents the confidence that he will do so over the summer?

[Mr Speaker:](#)

I am very glad that the hon. Gentleman has found his exercise therapeutic. The nation has been enriched in consequence.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Mr Speaker, you have the habit of keeping the best until last.

I say to my hon. Friend the Member for Bath (Ben Howlett) that there has already been a lot of investment, including around Bristol airport. As has been made clear by everybody who has taken part in the debate on the statement, there is a lot more to look at than what is happening as far as London is concerned. That connectivity to all parts of the United Kingdom is important.

[Mr Speaker:](#)

I am most grateful to the Secretary of State. We got through 60 Back Benchers in 56 Back-Bench minutes. It is not for the Chair to express any view on the content of answers—that is not a matter for me; such matters are the subject of much dispute in all parts of the House—but the Secretary of State could usefully conduct seminars for his Cabinet colleagues on the merits of pithy responses. If he is unwilling to court the unpopularity that such an offer would involve, it would be quite a useful deployment of the time of a Government Whip to circulate the relevant copy of the Official Report to other Ministers, because they would usefully profit from the instruction that it contained.

[Mr McLoughlin:](#)

Mr Speaker, I think you are trying to get me into trouble.

[Mr Speaker:](#)

Would I do such a thing?