Outlook

RE: Heathrow expansion - project lifetime with respect to climate change flood risk assessment

From Expansion of Heathrow Airport (Third Runway) <HeathrowAirport@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Date Tue 10/11/2026 15:21
To [redacted]
Cc Expansion of Heathrow Airport (Third Runway) <HeathrowAirport@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>

Dear [redacted]

Thank you for your email.

We will respond to your questions as follows:

a. We are aware of the intention to use a 100-year design life, as indicated in the Heathrow Airport Limited (HAL) scoping report, and a 60-year design life, as indicated in the Heathrow West (HW) scoping report. No concerns on this matter were raised in consultation responses for HAL, and the matter was not explicitly addressed in the HAL Scoping Opinion (and addendum). The Scoping Opinion for HW has not yet been adopted. The Inspectorate can confirm receipt of the EA's response to consultation on the HW scoping report and notes that the advice provided on this matter will be considered within the scoping opinion for HW.

b. This will be a matter for any future appointed Examining Authority (ExA) to decide based on the documents submitted with the application and taking account of consultees' comments and contemporary policy and guidance, whether they are satisfied that the applicant's assessment is sufficiently robust to base a recommendation on.

   Whilst NSIPs will often have a decommissioning date, the regime covers such a wide range of development types that it is possible that a decommissioning date might not be given. On that basis, it would seem reasonable to adopt a timescale comparable with that used for other types of development where one would not normally expect there to be a decommissioning date such as residential and railway developments, for which a 100-year horizon is often tested.

   However, please note this will be a matter the appointed Examining Authority (ExA), if the application is accepted for examination to decide, based on the information submitted and taking account of consultees' comments and contemporary policy and guidance, whether they are satisfied that the applicant's assessment is sufficiently robust to base a recommendation on. As a starting point an ExA will usually look to see if a methodology has been agreed with relevant statutory bodies which is based on the approach advised in current policy and guidance. We would therefore encourage you to agree the scope with the respective applicants during the pre-application stage on that basis and if the applications are accepted to provide a clear written justification for the scope at relevant representation stage which can be put before the ExA.

As you may be aware, these applications are not expected to be submitted until late 2027, which means that flood risk may not be examined until summer 2028. Consequently, if you are aware of any forthcoming changes to policy or guidance, or if changes occur before any examination closes, we encourage you to proactively address any changes with the applicants.

We note that you have sent this email to the Heathrow West and Expansion of Heathrow Airport (Third Runway) mailbox. These Heathrow projects are being managed separately by its own dedicated case team. Please therefore ensure that communication is only directed to the project it relates to.

Kind regards
Jessica Weatherby

Planning Inspectorate

Jessica Weatherby [redacted]
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From: [redacted]
Sent: 30 October 2026 10:21
To: Expansion of Heathrow Airport (Third Runway) <HeathrowAirport@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>; Heathrow West <heathrowwest@planninginspectorate.gov.uk>
Subject: Heathrow expansion - project lifetime with respect to climate change flood risk assessment

Some people who received this message don't often get email from [redacted]

Hi teams,

My team (Green Growth and Delivery) are working on both Heathrow Airport expansion proposals for the Environment Agency. As part of this we will need to assess the flood risk of the projects. Normally a DCO project would have a decommissioning date, which would set the lifetime of the project to inform the level of climate change assessment needed for flood risk. However, both Heathrow projects don't have a decommissioning date which means they are essentially set to exist indefinitely.

The flood risk planning policy we would normally use to support our positions requires projects to be "safe for its lifetime". HAL (and we believe HWL) are suggesting they will use 100 years as the lifetime for this assessment. However, we think this needs to be formally agreed otherwise it could cause issues at examination.

Therefore, we have two questions:

a) are PINS aware that HAL and HWL are intending to use a 100 year design life for their flood risk assessment, and do they support this? and
b) will you require further assessment of possible impacts and mitigation for after the 100 years (e.g. managed adaptive approach), to account for the indefinite operation of the project?

Please could you let me know if you are not the right teams to discuss this with and if there is someone better suited.

Kind regards

[redacted]
Planning Specialist

Green Growth & Delivery
Hertfordshire & North London

[redacted]

Environment Agency

For homes and habitats

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