

Help keep the Thames Estuary a critical flight path – for the 300,000 birds that visit every year

*On the doorstep of one of the world's foremost waterways lies over a thousand square kilometres of mudflats and marshland, home to some of Britain's rarest species such as the water vole and the marsh harrier. The Greater Thames has been at the heart of the country's economy for centuries, as a base for commercial shipping, intensive farming, heavy industry, power generation and now as home to six million people. **Yet it is still one of the most important places for nature in the UK.***

Today the Thames Estuary is in fact one of the most important wetlands in Europe, a vital migration hub for hundreds of thousands of wildfowl and wading birds. For some it becomes their home each winter as they escape the freezing north, here to feed on its mud flats and salt-marshes; others are in transit, heading on to winter homes further south. The richness of the estuary not only sustains them through the winter, but provides the fuel they will need to fly back north to breed the following spring. In the summer a smaller number of birds establish themselves in the Estuary, nesting and rearing their chicks on the marshes.

The significance of the Thames for its wildlife is recognised and protected by an array of international, European and UK designations, but proposals to build airports there are nothing new – dating back to shortly after WWII. Each has been rejected on business, aviation, safety and environmental grounds. **If one were to be built there now it would almost certainly be the largest single deliberate act of protected wildlife habitat destruction ever perpetrated in our country.**

That so much of our natural coastal environment has survived in the Thames Estuary into the 21st century is something we should celebrate, and we want future generations to be able to enjoy this natural resource too.

How you can help

We know the Thames is amazing, but we're concerned that the Government's independent Airports Commission haven't had the chance to really understand how special it is. With all this focus on the Estuary as an airport location, it could be easy to lose sight of what the Greater Thames means to the people who live there and visit the area. **Please help us remind them of what's at stake.**

Please write to the Commission and tell them about *your* Estuary, and what it means to you. You can email them at airports.enquiries@airports.gsi.gov.uk, or post your letter to Sir Howard Davies, Chair, Airports Commission, Sanctuary Buildings, 20 Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT.

You can help us to track the progress of our campaign by sending a copy of your letter, and any reply, to the Parliamentary Campaigns Team, No Estuary Airport Campaign, RSPB, The Lodge, FREEPOST ANG6335, Sandy, Bedfordshire SG19 2BR. Alternatively you can email us at campaigns@rspb.org.uk.

If you want to find out more about our campaign against an airport in the Estuary and for future actions, keep an eye on our website rspb.org.uk/noestuaryairport.

Thank you for your support.