

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-37632696>

Heathrow accused by cleaners over living wage deal

By Sean CoughlanBBC News

- 12 October 2016
- From the sectionUK

[Share](#)



Cleaners at Heathrow say that low pay is damaging their families' lives. rs at Heathrow say that low pay is damaging their families' lives

Cleaners at Heathrow have complained to the airport's boss they are not getting a living wage for London, agreed as part of plans for a third runway.

The airport, which is waiting for an imminent decision on expansion, agreed to pay £9.40 an hour.

But the airport workers say this is paid only to directly employed staff and not those working through agencies.

They say low wages and long hours deny them "dignity" and the chance to spend time with their children.

Extra runway conditions

The Airports Commission's official report into airport expansion set a number of conditions for Heathrow if it was given the go-ahead for another runway.

These included environmental and noise limits - but also said that Heathrow should adopt the London living wage.



Heathrow airport is waiting to hear a decision about plans for expansion

But cleaners and other airport workers at Heathrow have written to chief executive John Holland-Kaye saying that in practice this has not been extended to all staff.

"We are the people that clean and work in your airport day in, day out. We quietly get on with our work to make sure passengers have a safe and comfortable journey," says the letter, signed by "Heathrow workers".

They say that directly employed staff are paid £9.40 per hour, but those who are employed through contractors might only receive £7.20.

This living wage refers to a voluntary rate of £8.25 an hour and £9.40 in London. The government's mandatory National Living Wage is £7.20 for workers over 25.

"We believe that not paying your cleaners and others the London living wage will be going against the Airports Commission's conditions," says the letter, which is supported by the Citizens UK community group.

"Our wages of £7.20 an hour are not enough in order to make ends meet in London. Rent is becoming increasingly expensive, transport costs too, and many of us have families to look after.

"This means that some of us have to work several jobs in order to be able to feed our families. This puts a lot of pressure on our family life as it means we work very long days and have little time to spend with our children."

They argue that if the principle of the living wage is accepted, it is only fair that it should be paid to "all workers on its premises".

"Paying people a real living wage that is linked to the cost of living makes the difference between always struggling to make ends meet versus having enough to get by," said a spokeswoman for Citizens UK.

In response, a spokesman for Heathrow said: "Heathrow is one of the few companies in London that pays all of its 6,000 directly employed colleagues the London living wage or more.

"We recognise the importance of the London living wage and we are looking at how we can roll it out to our supply chain in the future."