COMMERCIAL AVIATION CAPACITY

Capacity Without Slack

How airport expansion, aircraft scarcity, SAF economics and regulated infrastructure redraw UK commercial aviation.

PUBLIC-SOURCE READ · CLAIM-LED · NOT A FORECAST

EVIDENCE REVIEWED 7 JUL 2026

LANSARY AEROSPACE

00

READING CONTRACT

The buyer question is whether demand converts into usable, financed, lower-carbon, reliable capacity.

— THE ANSWER

Demand is visible. Capacity is the scarce object.

UK commercial aviation has moved from recovery into constraint. The question is no longer whether people want to fly; it is whether the sector can assemble the inputs that make a flight real.

>61m
UK AIRPORT PASSENGERS IN Q1 2026

18,100
AIRCRAFT IN IATA ORDER BACKLOG

£28.80
CAA H8 MIDPOINT, 2024 CPIH PRICES

DESCRIPTIVE CONTRACT

This is not a forecast and it is not advice. It is a public-source, claim-led aviation read built from regulator, government, approved judgment-copy, industry-body, promoter and consultancy sources.

SOURCE: CAA, DfT, IATA, CAA H8, SAF mandate, DCO records.

01

CONSTRAINT STACK

The unit that matters is not a passenger. It is capacity that can be flown.

FINDING 1

The binding unit is integrated flight capacity.

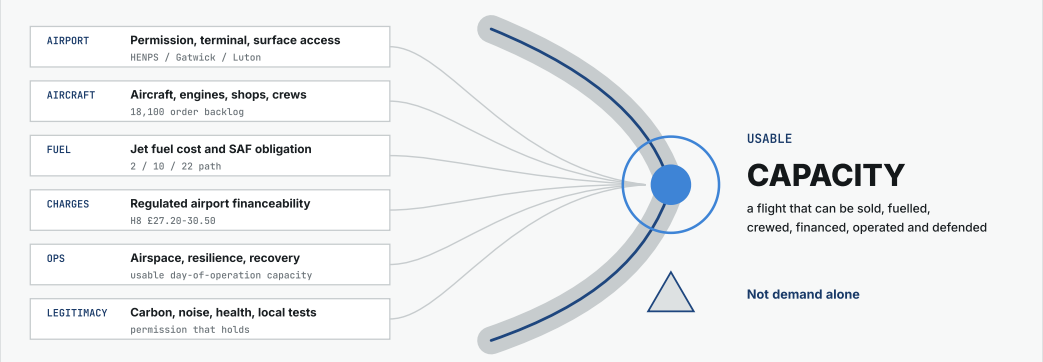
A seat needs runway permission, aircraft, engines, crews, maintenance, fuel, SAF compliance, charge economics, airspace resilience and public legitimacy. The stack rations growth when those inputs tighten together.

THE READ · FINDING 1 OF 5

BASIS — REGULATOR + GOVERNMENT + INDUSTRY-BODY SOURCES

E1 Capacity is assembled from constrained inputs

Public-source synthesis from selected claim IDs C001-C010.



SOURCE: CAA; DfT HENPS and Heathrow appraisal; CAA H8; UK SAF mandate; IATA June 2026.

Passenger demand is present: the CAA says UK airports handled more than 61 million passengers in the first quarter of 2026, a first-quarter record.

That proof does not settle capacity. The useful strategic question is which actors can turn constrained inputs into a dependable flight, at a cost and carbon position the market can absorb.

READ

The scarce object is the usable capacity unit, not the demand signal.

INDICATED READ

SOURCE: CAA S001; DfT S002-S004; CAA H8 S005; SAF S006-S007; IATA S008-S009.

02

EVENT MAP

The July 2026 aviation stack is live across demand, policy, fuel, charges and airport consent.

FINDING 2

The policy calendar has become an operating constraint.

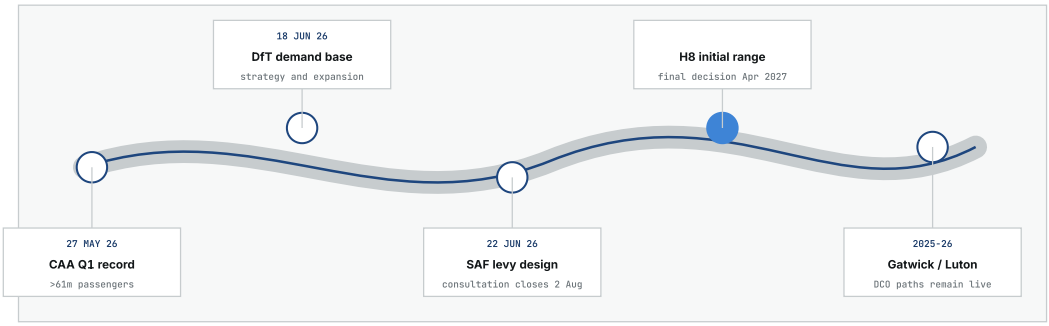
The live events are not background. They are the mechanisms through which demand, carbon, airport permission, financeability and airline economics meet.

THE READ · FINDING 2 OF 5

BASIS — OFFICIAL RELEASES AND APPROVED JUDGMENT-COPY RECORD

E2 The live event map

Dated public documents, accessed and checked 7 Jul 2026.



SOURCE: CAA passenger release; DfT aviation demand base; DfT SAF RCM; CAA H8; Planning Inspectorate.

The Heathrow H8 control, the SAF RCM levy design, the HENPS route and the Gatwick and Luton DCO paths are all capacity gates. They convert policy text into price, permission, obligation and delivery risk.

The point for operators, infrastructure owners, suppliers and investors is immediate: the next UK aviation cycle is not a clean demand-growth case. It is a conversion test.

READ

Policy timing is now part of the commercial capacity model.

INDICATED READ

SOURCE: S001-S013.

03

AIRPORT MODELS

Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton add different capacity products.

FINDING 3

London capacity is three different products.

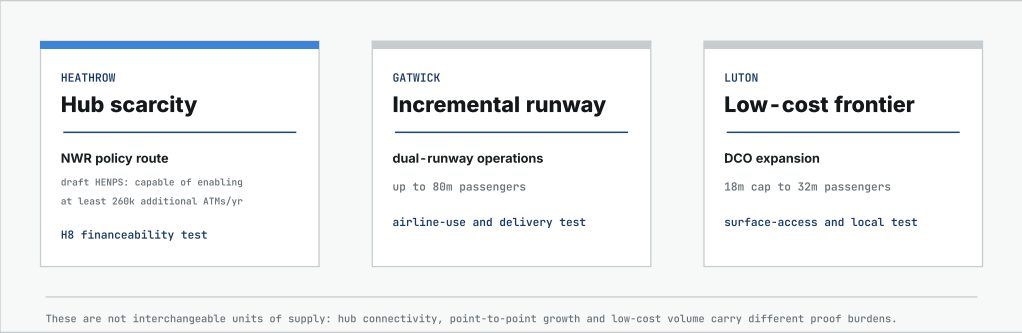
The South East airport debate should not flatten Heathrow, Gatwick and Luton into one generic runway story. Each has a different proof burden.

THE READ · FINDING 3 OF 5

BASIS — PLANNING, POLICY AND PROMOTER-LABELLED SOURCES

E3 Three airport capacity models

Heathrow ATMs and Gatwick/Luton passenger figures use source-native units.



SOURCE: DfT HENPS and Heathrow appraisal; Planning Inspectorate Gatwick and Luton DCO decisions; Gatwick promoter page.

Heathrow is the hub-scarcity and regulated-financeability model. Gatwick is the privately financed incremental-runway model. Luton is the low-cost and leisure-capacity model at the planning frontier.

The read does not treat promoter benefits as independent findings. Gatwick economic and job figures remain promoter-labelled in the source register.

READ

Airport capacity has to be typed before it can be valued.

INDICATED READ

SOURCE: DfT S003-S004; Planning Inspectorate S010, S012; Gatwick S011.

04

AIRCRAFT SCARCITY

Runway permission is necessary; aircraft and engines decide whether it becomes flown capacity.

FINDING 4

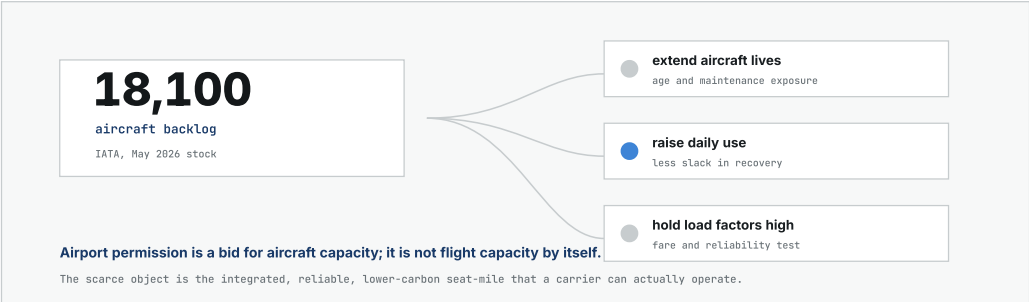
Runway permission is not flight capacity.

Airport expansion can create permission, but aircraft, engines, maintenance capacity and crews decide whether permission becomes reliable flight supply.

THE READ · FINDING 4 OF 5 BASIS — INDUSTRY-BODY AND CONSULTANCY CONTEXT

E4 Aircraft scarcity changes the airport equation

Backlog figure is source-native; operating responses are IATA-described.



SOURCE: IATA Global Outlook for Air Transport, June 2026; PwC and Deloitte 2026 aerospace outlooks.

IATA reports an aircraft order backlog of 18,100 aircraft in May 2026. It also describes airlines absorbing missing capacity through older aircraft, higher daily use and high load factors.

That response creates an aftermarket and reliability question. MRO, engine-shop capacity, spares and workforce depth become part of the commercial aviation capacity stack.

READ

A permission without aircraft is a capacity option, not a flight.

INDICATED READ

SOURCE: IATA S009; PwC S015; Deloitte S016.

05

COST ALLOCATION

SAF, fuel and airport charges turn decarbonisation and infrastructure into price mechanics.

FINDING 5

SAF and charges turn the capacity story into a cost-allocation story.

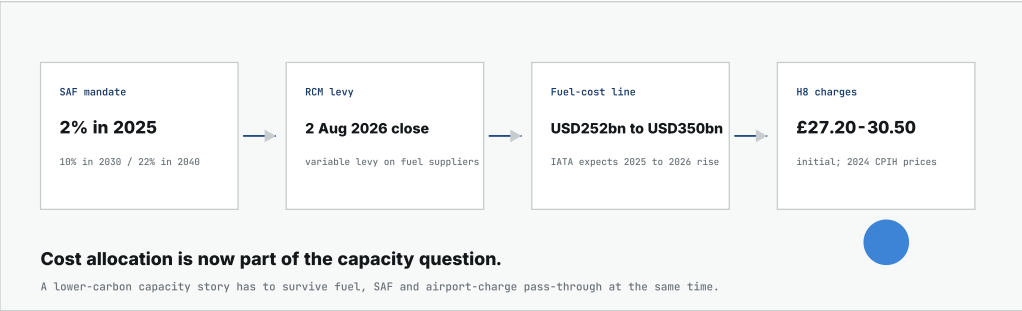
Lower-carbon growth has to be paid for. The commercial question is how the fuel, SAF and regulated-charge stack moves through suppliers, airlines, airports and passengers.

THE READ · FINDING 5 OF 5

BASIS — GOVERNMENT, REGULATOR AND INDUSTRY-BODY SOURCES

E5 Cost mechanisms now sit inside the capacity gate

Values are source-native and not converted across currency or unit systems.



SOURCE: DfT SAF Mandate and RCM levy consultation; IATA June 2026 fuel-cost release; CAA H8 initial proposals.

The UK SAF mandate starts at 2% in 2025, then moves to 10% in 2030 and 22% in 2040. The RCM levy-design consultation closes on 2 August 2026 and describes an industry-funded variable levy on aviation fuel suppliers.

The same cycle carries the IATA global airline fuel-cost line and CAA H8 initial proposals. Capacity therefore has to survive carbon credibility, producer financeability, airline economics and passenger tolerance together.

READ

Capacity is credible only when the cost pass-through story holds.

INDICATED READ

SOURCE: SAF S006-S007; IATA S008; CAA H8 S005.

06

SCENARIO MAP

Scenario language is judgement, not fact.

SCENARIO FRAME

Four ways the constraint stack can resolve.

The scenarios keep uncertainty visible. They are not a forecast; they are a set of watchable paths through the same evidence base.

E6 Capacity scenarios, 2026-2031

Scenario labels are analytical judgement; source claims remain in the public claim register.

SOURCE: Lansary synthesis from CAA, DfT, CAA H8, SAF, IATA, Planning Inspectorate and consultancy sources.

Managed growth requires enough alignment across airport delivery, aircraft availability, fuel, SAF, charges, airspace and fare tolerance. Carbon bottleneck, cost squeeze and supply rationing are the contrary paths.

The trigger list is operational: H8 decision, HENPS progress, Gatwick delivery, Luton delivery path, aircraft and engine reliability, SAF RCM design, fuel costs, fares, load factors and route allocation.

SOURCE: derived from public claim register C001-C015; not a forecast.

07

WHO HAS ADVANTAGE

The best position is control over several constrained inputs.

MARKET STRUCTURE

The advantage belongs to capacity integrators.

The winner is not simply an airport or airline category. Advantage sits with actors that secure several scarce inputs at once.

For airlines, the practical map is aircraft availability, engine exposure, airport charge sensitivity, SAF cost, slot position and fare tolerance.

For airports, the proof is deliverable, financeable, airline-supported capacity, not demand volume on a slide.

ACTOR	ADVANTAGE	CONSTRAINT TO CLOSE
Network carriers	premium yield, feed, scarce slots	fuel, hub charges, widebody access
Low-cost carriers	short-haul demand and use discipline	aircraft delays, SAF and fare tolerance
Heathrow	hub scarcity and national-connectivity case	H8, financeability, mitigation and politics
Gatwick	incremental runway and private-finance story	delivery, surface access and airline use
Luton / low-cost airports	volume growth and planning precedent	local impacts and low-margin traffic
Lessors / MRO	scarce aircraft and extended fleet lives	parts, labour, engine reliability and credit
SAF producers	mandated demand and RCM direction	feedstock, scale-up, levy design and cost gap

SOURCE: source-led synthesis; public claim register C001-C015.

08

HOW TO READ

Every public finding is tied to a visible source family and a stated proof boundary.

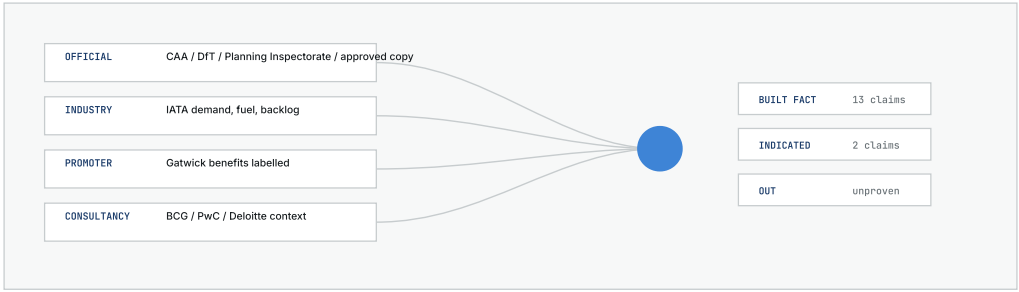
EVIDENCE

How to read the evidence.

The report uses source-native facts where the public record is strong, labelled synthesis where the inference is analytical, and excludes unsupported claims.

E7 Source families to evidence status

Facts, labelled synthesis and excluded claims are separated on the public surface.



Buyer rule: source-native facts, labelled synthesis and no unsupported claim in the public argument.

SOURCE: public source register and dated source capture, 7 Jul 2026.

Official and regulator sources carry demand, policy, consent and charge mechanics. Industry-body sources carry global airline economics and aircraft scarcity. Promoter claims and consultancy context are labelled and bounded.

That boundary protects the read: the report can be useful without converting a promoter benefit, consultancy view or scenario label into proof.

SOURCE: public source register, accessed and checked 7 Jul 2026.

09

SOURCE REGISTER

The public source links are listed on this page.

SOURCE REGISTER

The public evidence used on the customer surface.

Official, regulator and industry-body sources carry the load-bearing factual claims. Promoter and consultancy material is labelled and not treated as primary proof.

PRIMARY AND OFFICIAL

S001	UK Civil Aviation Authority, Q1 2026 passenger record, 27 May 2026. Source link
S002	Department for Transport, UK aviation demand base, 18 Jun 2026. Source link
S003	Department for Transport, Heathrow Expansion Appraisal Report, Jun 2026. Source link
S004	Department for Transport, draft Heathrow Expansion National Policy Statement, 18 Jun 2026. Source link
S005	UK Civil Aviation Authority, Heathrow H8 price-cap initial proposals, 26 Jun 2026. Source link
S006	Department for Transport, SAF RCM levy design consultation, 22 Jun 2026. Source link
S007	Department for Transport, SAF Mandate collection, updated 16 Jun 2026. Source link
S010	Planning Inspectorate, Gatwick Northern Runway DCO decision, 22 Sep 2025. Source link
S012	Planning Inspectorate, Luton expansion DCO decision, 3 Apr 2025. Source link
S013	39 Essex Chambers-hosted approved judgment copy, Luton appeal extension refused, May 2026. Source link

INDUSTRY AND CONTEXT

S008	IATA, June 2026 profitability and fuel-cost release, 7 Jun 2026. Source link
S009	IATA, Global Outlook for Air Transport, June 2026. Source link
S011	London Gatwick, Future Plans page, accessed 7 Jul 2026; promoter claims labelled. Source link
S014	BCG, Air Travel Outlook 2026: Revenues and Costs Are Rising, 29 Jan 2026. Source link
S015	PwC, Global aerospace and defence outlook, 2026 edition. Source link
S016	Deloitte, 2026 Aerospace and Defense Industry Outlook. Source link

Source links captured or accessed 7 Jul 2026. All claims are descriptive. This report is not advice, not assurance and not a forecast.

SOURCE: public-source register, accessed and checked 7 Jul 2026.

10

LEAD MAGNET CLOSE

The next step is a scoped proof sprint around one capacity claim.

WHAT LANSARY DOES NEXT

Turn the aviation stack into a board-ready capacity proof.

A useful next engagement does not ask whether aviation demand exists. It asks where capacity breaks, who controls the break, and what proof closes it.

1	15	5
CAPACITY THESIS TO TEST	PUBLIC CLAIMS IN REGISTER	PROOF SPRINT OUTPUTS

The practical buyer motion is a proof sprint: define the growth claim, separate public proof from management assertion, then map the constrained inputs that decide whether the claim can hold.

For aviation, that means joining airports, aircraft, fuel, SAF, charges, MRO, passenger tolerance and policy timing into one evidence surface.

NEXT STEP

Book a 30-minute capacity proof call.

Bring one airport, fleet, route, SAF or financing claim. Lansary returns the first proof map: claim to test, source families, control points, watchlist and evidence gaps.

lansary.com/access.html · **You see the claim, source trail and limits; the operating method remains private.**

SOURCE: Lansary service framing; no external claim.

LANSARY. | AEROSPACE

Capacity Without Slack is a public-source Lansary Aerospace briefing. It separates built evidence, indicated synthesis and unproven claims.

BOUNDARY

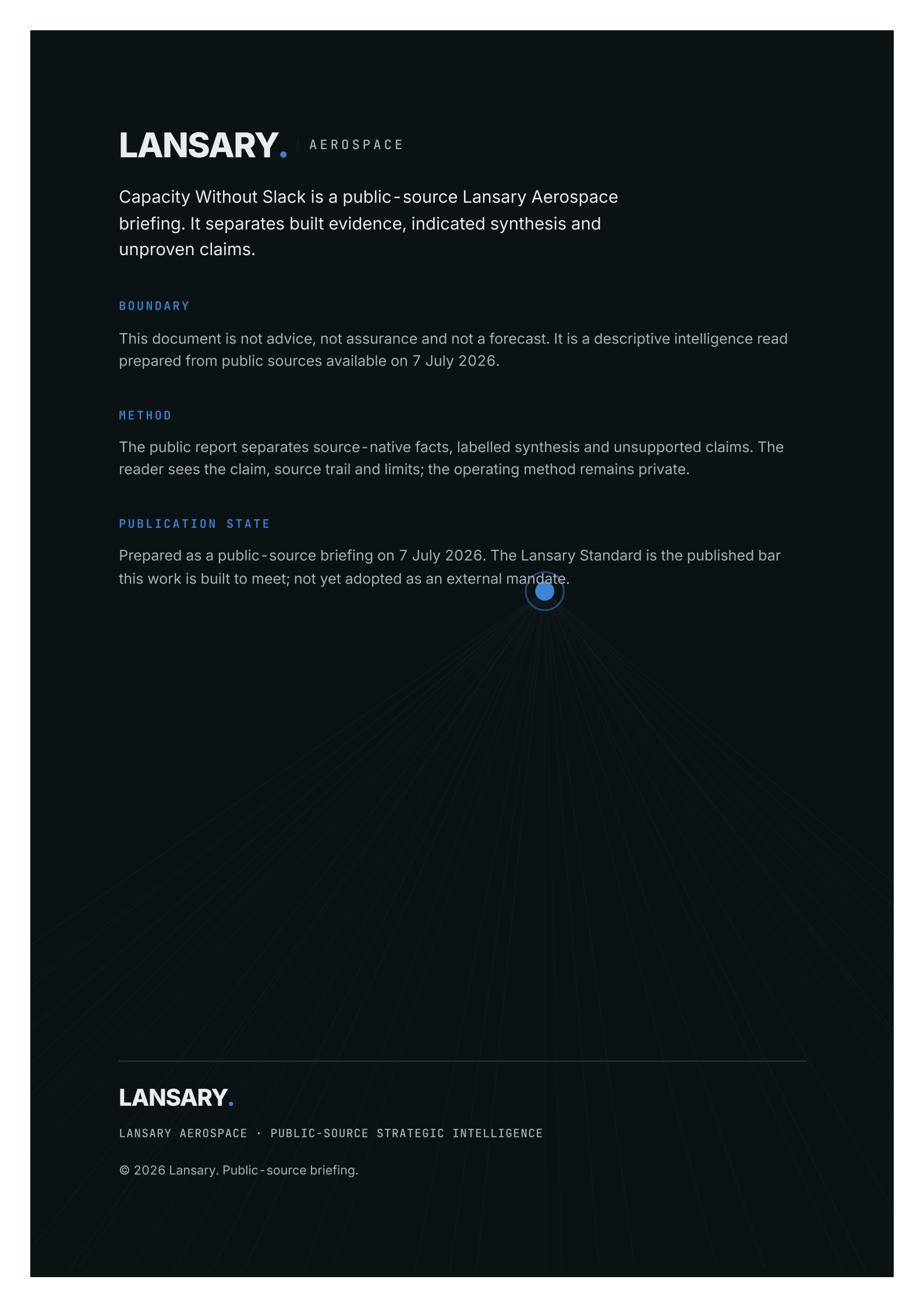
This document is not advice, not assurance and not a forecast. It is a descriptive intelligence read prepared from public sources available on 7 July 2026.

METHOD

The public report separates source-native facts, labelled synthesis and unsupported claims. The reader sees the claim, source trail and limits; the operating method remains private.

PUBLICATION STATE

Prepared as a public-source briefing on 7 July 2026. The Lansary Standard is the published bar this work is built to meet; not yet adopted as an external mandate.



LANSARY.

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