

March 12th 2007

**Failure to understand the importance of transfer passengers  
to sustaining Heathrow is “economic folly”  
says Future Heathrow chief.**

In response to comments made today (March 12<sup>th</sup>) by Liberal Democrat MP Norman Baker, Clive Soley, Campaign Director of Future Heathrow said:

“It is economic folly to suggest that long-haul routes for transfer passengers should be removed from Heathrow.”

“It would give the economic advantage to our European competitors who are already beating Heathrow in the destinations stakes.

It would not reduce carbon emissions as he suggests, but would simply remove these passengers from the UK to the continent where they would transfer from Frankfurt, Paris or Amsterdam, making the UK an isolated satellite of Europe.

“ Mr Baker is also perpetrating a myth to suggest that all transfer passengers come from abroad. The reality is that a high proportion of passengers are UK residents, flying from Scotland and other UK regions to the national hub airport to catch connecting flights to long-haul destinations. Many of these regional passengers are business people making their journeys to sell British goods and services that create wealth and jobs across the country.”

Not only do transfer passengers sustain Heathrow as an international hub airport they also allow for international links to UK regions where rail is an impractical alternative and would not be used by overseas travellers.

Transfer passengers who are not UK-based also make a critical contribution to UK business. Without seat purchases from overseas transfer passengers, many long-haul routes from Heathrow would be unviable.

“Mr Baker’s suggestion that direct flights abroad could be made from regional airports completely avoids the reality of how airlines sustain routes. For many UK regions having a link to a global hub airport is vital for economic development. Heathrow’s gateway to the global economy plays a key role in attracting globally mobile and high-value added business to the Thames Valley and West London area.”

“ Mr Baker should visit some of the continental hub airports to see how modern public transport interchange works using road, rail and air links. He is in danger of setting the UK apart from the European and global economy.

Ends

**Further information from Clive Soley 07785 250 456**

Notes to editors:

Example: Transfer passengers are important because they help to maintain a global network of direct overseas air routes. For example, there might be not enough demand in London to support regular and frequent flights to Beijing, But, because one third of Heathrow’s passengers are transfer passengers, this creates enough demand for airlines to be able to operate a frequent and regular long-haul route to Beijing.