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Lord Soley tells local authorities: “We are ready to talk. Are you?”

In a major speech today, Tuesday 10 June, Future Heathrow Campaign Director Lord Soley will offer talks with local authorities and campaign groups opposed to Heathrow’s expansion. He will say:

“I have a very clear message to those local authorities who oppose expansion and to some of their support groups like HACAN. I recognise your opposition to a third runway is principled and strongly felt but whether this expansion goes ahead or not please recognise that Heathrow is in trouble compared to the other European hubs with which it has to compete. We all have a duty to put the prosperity of this region around Heathrow first.

“If expansion doesn’t go ahead then we must talk about the decline that we all know is taking place now and the impacts for the area of that accelerating. If, as I hope, expansion does go ahead then we all have a duty to see that it is done efficiently and with due care for the environment and for those people who suffer a loss as a result of expansion.

“If we continue to stand apart from each other and just fight for some illusory final victory then we will have betrayed the people of west London and the Thames Valley. We are ready to talk. Are you?”

Lord Soley’s intervention is motivated by a desire to avoid the mistakes of the Terminal 5 public inquiry when local authorities spent millions of pounds on legal fees in Britain’s longest running planning inquiry. In a wide ranging speech Lord Soley will also talk about the need to better integrate rail into Heathrow, and his

fears that Heathrow will be forced to close if a replacement airport is built in the Thames Estuary. He will say:

“Many of the campaign groups campaigning against expansion thought I was scaremongering when I drew an analogy between Heathrow’s current position and the London docks in the 1960’s. I haven’t heard so much of this criticism now that people are talking of closing Heathrow and opening a new hub airport in the Thames Estuary – precisely as I feared.”

There are 72,000 on-airport jobs at Heathrow, and an estimated 100,000 further jobs that are dependent on the airport. It is the biggest single-site employer in the whole of the UK, and in some local boroughs more than 10% of people in employment work on the airport.

The Government’s consultation on proposals for adding capacity at Heathrow closed in February and a policy decision is expected within the next few months. If expansion is approved then a third runway could be built by 2020 as long as the airport can meet strict environmental limits on noise and air quality and improve public transport.

Notes to editors:

1. Lord Soley will be speaking at the Conference *Airport Development: Gateway to the Future* at the Heathrow Crowne Plaza Hotel on Tuesday 10 June.
2. Lord Soley is available for interview. Call 07785 250456.
3. Members of Future Heathrow include Amicus, ATAG, BAA, BALPA, BAR UK, BATA, bmi, British Airways, Boeing UK, CBI, Destination Heathrow, GMB, IATA, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Airline Operators Committee (Heathrow), London First, Thames Valley Economic Partnership, TUC, TGWU, Virgin Atlantic Airways, and West London Business.