

TAKE TRAINS TO THE PLANES, SAYS SOLEY

Heathrow airport needs to become one of Britain's biggest rail interchanges to guarantee its success in the greener world of the future, an aviation leader said today.

Lord Soley, campaign director of Future Heathrow, said it was vital to improve rail links to Reading, Guildford, south London, Docklands and beyond to reduce road congestion and pollution in the areas around the airport.

He called for Heathrow to be linked directly to the Great Western main line to provide high-speed rail services to South Wales and the South West.

Lord Soley said: "My vision is for tens of thousands of people to be travelling to and from Heathrow by train every day. With rail schemes already in the pipeline, this would massively reduce congestion on the roads round the airport, and greenhouse gas emissions.

"This is the way forward for major airports. Hubs like Paris and Frankfurt already have excellent rail links, enabling them to combine high runway capacity with integrated surface transport systems that maximise speed, efficiency and environmental sensitivity.

"We must emulate this model at Heathrow. If we are serious about Heathrow remaining a hub airport well into the 21st century then we not only need a third runway but we urgently need to think about a ground transport system to support it even if the construction timeframe goes beyond our present plans."

He also urged rapid progress on the AirTrack and Crossrail schemes. AirTrack, which has just received official endorsement from the Government, would provide the 'missing link' between Staines and Heathrow, enabling trains to run to Waterloo via Feltham, Twickenham and Richmond and to Guildford via Woking and Chertsey.

Services would also operate to Reading through Wokingham and Bracknell. Crossrail would bring passengers direct to the airport from London's West End, City and Canary Wharf.

Lord Soley went on: "These schemes will not only benefit Heathrow passengers and workers and local road users. They will also boost jobs in the region by stimulating new investment or helping to reduce labour immobility and shortages."

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Notes to Editors

1. Lord Soley was speaking to a meeting of the Thames Valley Property Forum.
2. Future Heathrow is an alliance of trade unions, business groups, airlines and professional associations supporting the sustainable development and modernisation of Heathrow.
3. For further information, please contact Lord Soley (formerly West London MP Clive Soley) on 07785 250 456