

24th April 2008

Embargoed 3.00 pm.

“LET’S HAVE A FRESH START FOR HEATHROW AIRPORT “

LORD SOLEY OF HAMMERSMITH. CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

FUTURE HEATHROW.

Speech to the Royal Aeronautical Society 24th April. 4, Hamilton Place, London, W1. Embargo: 3pm 24th April 2008

In an important new speech to an expert audience at the Royal Aeronautical Society, Lord Soley, Campaign Director of Future Heathrow called for a fresh approach to the discussions on the future of Heathrow Airport. He pointed to the growing campaign to build a new hub airport and close Heathrow.

Clive Soley criticised the way the debate in the UK had been allowed to slip into ‘simplistic arguments’ that ignored the previous studies of Britain’s hub airport needs.” He said that an airport in the Thames estuary was not the answer and had been rejected after careful consideration. “Those in favour of closing Heathrow seriously underestimate the cost and the environmental impact of creating a new hub elsewhere,” he said. “There are 72,000 jobs on Heathrow airport and another 100,000 dependent on it in the Thames Valley and west London area. Where are the houses, schools, hospitals road and rail system to go if we build a new hub airport in the south east? And what will happen to employment in west London and the Thames Valley if we lose Heathrow?” he asked.

Clive Soley also highlighted the importance of rail which he said should play an important part in fully integrated airport expansion, offering passengers a choice of transport.

“We have an opportunity to show that a modernised and expanded Heathrow can be developed as an intermodal hub as has already happened in Europe. Rail and air may compete but they are also complementary if provided in a way that allows the passengers a choice that fits their needs,” he said.

Clive Soley said there was a lack of understanding about the role of hub airports and this has led opponents of Heathrow to believe there is a comfortable solution which would allow Heathrow to remain as it is, using other London airports or rail as alternatives to expansion.

“But, over 40% of the passengers flying from Manchester to Heathrow are transferring to international flights and around 30% from Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Glasgow. Do we really think these passengers are going to get the train to London, take their luggage on the tube before checking in to their onward flight at Heathrow? I think they are going to check into their final destination and fly straight there via Heathrow. And if they can't go via Heathrow they will go via one of the continental hubs.”

“A hub airport is not just a destination airport,” he said. “They are like the great railways stations of the 19th century where people would catch connecting services to other local destinations. Those networks did for the British economy what the great hub airports do for the emerging global economy and do now for the European economy.

“Heathrow can only fly passengers to 180 destinations compared to 227 in 1990. Frankfurt can fly passengers to 307 and they lie at the heart of the emerging European market of 600 million people. They have a dynamic and expanding financial sector which also contains the European Bank. Can we really allow the future of Heathrow to drift any further into decline?”

“Local opponents of a third runway share my concern that Heathrow must not close. We need a new approach between local councils, local groups, the airport, trade unions and industry to campaign for a proper intermodal hub that can compete with Frankfurt, Paris and Amsterdam.”

Ends

Notes to editors:

1. For further information contact Lord Clive Soley on 07785 250456
2. 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.