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LEADING PROTESTOR CLAIMS HEATHROW IN DANGER OF BECOMING LIKE EAST LONDON WHEN THE DOCKS CLOSED

The chief spokesman for the leading protest group against a third runway, HACAN, has said "If anything happened to Heathrow West London is in danger of becoming like East London when the docks closed".

In an article written on December 14th, in Skyport, the Heathrow newspaper, John Stewart, Campaign Director of HACAN made his apparent u-turn in an attempt to counter all the evidence for the economic case for Heathrow. Seventy-two thousand jobs are directly dependent on the airport, and a further 100,000 jobs are linked to Heathrow throughout the local region.

In the article, Mr Stewart not only compared the future of West London without Heathrow to East London when the docks closed, but claimed that "the way to prevent that is to scrap the current expansion plans, curtail the growth of the airport and encourage the economy of West London to diversify."

Clive Soley, Campaigns Director for Future Heathrow said: "I am astounded by John Stewart's remarks, but also delighted that he has finally acknowledged that without expansion, Heathrow would face major job losses. However, I can't understand how he and HACAN which he represents, have come to believe that diversification could happen without the airport. He makes not one solid suggestion.

"I have written myself about the important lessons to be learned from the Docklands experience, when unemployment went through the roof and house prices hit the floor. I am not sure how Mr Stewart thinks diversification without a major international airport hub could happen. He makes only vague statements. Heathrow is the biggest single site employer in the UK. It just does not make any sense to infer that lack of expansion would not cause catastrophic economic consequences if some woolly idea of encouragement to diversify was made," said Clive Soley.

"We are rapidly being made aware of just how far Heathrow has fallen behind its major European competitors. Just ten days after John Stewart's article in December, Frankfurt airport announced it had been given the go-ahead to build a fourth runway. Frankfurt is already ahead of Heathrow in the league tables of destinations. It is now on course to overtake Heathrow on flight movements by 2020. Does Mr Stewart think Frankfurt's authorities made their decision for reasons other than economic prosperity for their region and for Germany?

It has taken the London Docklands over 20 years to recover from the devastation of their collapse and they too are now dependant on a specific market – that of the

finance sector. Heathrow also is hugely important to London and to London business, and that is why Future Heathrow's supporters include the CBI, West London Business, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry and London First.

This is not just a matter of belief, 'of not buying the business argument' but Future Heathrow's case is built on sound economic evidence from numerous robust economic studies including Oxford Economic Forecasting (OEF) which stated that a third runway would benefit the economy by £7billion. We aim to ensure that expansion is sustainable both environmentally and economically and that it continues to bring serious benefit to West London and the region."

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.