



HEATHROW GROWTH TO BRING UK £10 BILLION A YEAR

BUSINESSES and unions called today for rapid progress on development of Heathrow following official rulings that plans for expanding runway capacity had passed environmental tests.

Future Heathrow, representing employers, staff and aviation organisations, hailed the Government's confirmation that proposals for a short, third runway and fuller use of the two existing runways would meet stringent requirements for reducing noise and improving local air quality.

The group urged that firm decisions should be taken quickly to implement the first increases in runway capacity at the UK's national hub since 1946. Expansion would benefit wealth and job creation across the country by nearly £10 billion a year.

The airport's growth would remove the threat to London's status as a global business capital and establish world-class air links for the UK regions to boost inward investment.

Richard Lambert, director general of the CBI, said: "Good air links are vital to UK businesses operating in a global economy, and Heathrow, as our national hub, has been constrained for too long. The government needs to move forward swiftly so that extra capacity at Heathrow can become a reality.

"Today's verdict that the local environmental tests can be met is an important step forward. We must also ensure that, as the threat from climate change grows, aviation plays its part in the move to a low carbon economy - even as demand for air travel increases."

Brendan Barber, general secretary of the TUC, said: "Aviation supports around 500,000 jobs in the UK, and many others in support services, so the future of Heathrow is crucial to our economy. We want to see Heathrow's development to deliver secure, high quality jobs in a well-unionised environment.

“We welcome the Government's commitment to balancing the economic benefits of airport expansion with environmental aspects, not only local noise and air pollution, but also national climate change priorities. The TUC looks forward to working with government to ensure the sustainable development of Heathrow.”

Stephen Nelson, chief executive of BAA, said: “This consultation spells good news for passengers. Heathrow is full and its dependence on two runways, while European competitors have four or five, causes delays, stacks and crawling taxiway queues. The cost of this congestion can be measured economically and environmentally.

“More efficient, or mixed-mode, use of the existing runways would allow us to cut delays at a stroke, while a third runway will mean we can add new destinations to the UK's global reach. There will be no more noise overall from the airport, better air quality, and improved public transport links.”

Willie Walsh, chief executive of British Airways, said: ‘We are committed to ensuring that growth is sustainable. By the time a third runway becomes operational, aviation emissions will have been capped by the EU for several years.

“If airlines want to fly more, they will have to pay for emissions reductions in other industries – so overall CO₂ in the atmosphere will not rise because of a third runway.”

Steve Ridgway, chief executive of Virgin Atlantic, said: “Limiting growth at Heathrow wouldn't prevent climate change because that growth would only go elsewhere.

“It would only serve to damage the UK's competitiveness, as well as limit the choice available to the huge number of people living in London who want to travel to visit friends and family. We rely on air travel to connect people and places on a wider scale.”

END

Notes to Editors:

1. The Government's consultation document includes conclusive modelling evidence that Heathrow's runway capacity can be increased while the airport's noise footprint remains less than the 127 km² maximum set as a condition for expansion in the 2003 'Future of Air Transport' White Paper.
2. The document also establishes that local nitrogen dioxide air pollution levels around an expanded Heathrow would not exceed EU limits.
3. A study by Oxford Economic Forecasting on the economic contribution of UK aviation found that a third runway at Heathrow would generate additional GDP of £7 billion a year in 2006 prices.

4. The same study found that fuller use of the two existing runways ('mixed mode' operation) would generate additional GDP of £2.5 billion a year in 2006 prices.
5. For further information, contact Clive Soley (07785 250456) of Future Heathrow, or BAA Heathrow on 020 8745 7224.
6. 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.