



LAUNCH OF FUTURE HEATHROW CAMPAIGN GROUP

A new campaign group, Future Heathrow, is being launched today to lobby for the continued development of Heathrow airport in line with the Government's Aviation White Paper.

Future Heathrow, which will be led by former West London MP, Clive Soley, will highlight the economic importance of Heathrow and encourage sustainable expansion at the airport. Members of the group include the CBI, London Chamber of Commerce, trade unions and UK and overseas airline representatives.

In December 2003, the government announced in its Future of Air Transport White Paper that a third runway should be built at Heathrow between 2015 and 2020 subject to environmental conditions being met.

The next step towards Heathrow's development is to be made shortly as BAA will publish its masterplan for the airport this summer. Next year there will be further consultations on the terminal facilities needed for a third runway and the introduction of "mixed mode" operations. "Mixed mode" would increase Heathrow's capacity by introducing take-offs and landings on both of the airport's existing two runways at the same time.

Clive Soley represented Hammersmith and then Ealing, Acton and Shepherds Bush as an MP for 26 years. Commenting on the launch of Future Heathrow, he said:

"Heathrow is critically important to the economic prosperity of West London and the Thames Valley and is a uniquely valuable asset to London and the UK.

“However, there’s a real threat to the airport unless its development continues. Visit any modern airport in Europe and you will see how Heathrow has fallen behind. In 1990, Heathrow served more destinations in Europe than any other airport except Frankfurt. By 2004, it was overtaken by Amsterdam, Paris Charles de Gaulle and Munich and, without the third runway, will be overtaken by Madrid, Milan and Rome, by 2015. These airports will continue to increase their competitive advantage over Heathrow until it is able to increase its capacity.

“We believe Heathrow can develop in a way that is sensitive to environmental issues and the needs of the local population. We have a duty to address the local residents’ concerns but their economic welfare is linked to Heathrow and no one will thank us for ducking difficult decisions now if we store up greater problems for the future.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Founder members of Future Heathrow are AMICUS, Air Transport Action Group, BALPA, Board of Airline Representatives in the UK, British Air Transport Association, bmi, British Airways, CBI, GMB, International Air Transport Association, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, London First, London Heathrow Airline Operators Committee, Thames Valley Economic Partnership, TUC, TGWU, Virgin Atlantic Airways, West London Business.

Clive Soley has expressed growing concern about delays to Heathrow’s expansion. In 2001 he refused to sign a letter publicly opposing a third runway at Heathrow and in July 2002 made the following statement to the House of Commons:

“May I remind my right honourable friend of Heathrow's importance as a premier airport to jobs and the economy in west London? If it were to decline seriously, the impact on the region would be at least as devastating as was the closure of the docks on east London. People need to understand that when making this judgment on air transport. As one who has lived under a flight path for much of my life, I admit that it is not easy to live with the noise, but I think that if Heathrow went into decline, the devastation wrought on west London would be extremely serious.”

(Hansard 23.07.02)