

PRESS RELEASE

6 May 2020

For immediate use

Heathrow Chief Executive questions whether third runway will be needed

Campaigners are calling for Heathrow to drop its plans for expansion at Heathrow Airport, following comments made by its Chief Executive, John Holland-Kaye, who said on Wednesday that a third runway wouldn't be needed for around 10 - 15 years.

At a virtual meeting of the Transport Select Committee, Heathrow's Chief Executive, John Holland-Kaye, was asked by Lilian Greenwood MP if the crisis facing the industry caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had created a hole in the economic case for a third runway at the airport (1).

Mr. Holland-Kaye did not address the question directly but confirmed that he is no longer thinking about the third runway. However, he did assert that if the UK is able to reboot the economy and demand returns to the pre-pandemic levels that he believes the 3rd runway may "be needed in 10-15 years' time."

Responding to another question from Ruth Cadbury MP, Holland-Kaye remarkably appeared to accept that there is uncertainty as to whether the third runway would be needed in the future, depending on how demand recovers over the next few years stating that *"Whether that [third runway] will be needed we will have to see how things turn out over the next few years. If we are successful in rebuilding the UK economy, we will be needed that in 10-15 years' time if not, then I think we're all in a different world"* (2).

On the basis of Mr. Holland-Kaye's answers, campaigners are calling on Heathrow to drop its plans for a third runway with immediate effect. This includes appealing a Court of Appeal ruling which stated climate targets has not been taken into account when the Government prepared plans for Heathrow expansion.

Paul Beckford, Policy Director of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, commented:

"It is remarkable that even Heathrow's Chief Executive now appears to accept that there may be no need for his expensive and climate busting third runway.

"The economic case for a third runway has always been negligible, has been eroded by delays even before a planning application has been submitted and must now be non-existent given the uncertainty around future demand.

"We believe that this uncertainty combined with the climate emergency means that Heathrow should withdraw their appeal to the Supreme Court and stop any planning or enabling costs associated with their expansion plans.

"Communities that have lived under the cloud of expansion for decades must be given proper reprieve from the threat of destruction and increased noise and air pollution."

ENDS.

Notes:

1. Transport Committee, 10.52am, 6 May 2020
<https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/ddfcb25d-ea31-4a37-86ba-daf1b4d6f032>
2. Transport Committee, 11.17am, 6 May 2020
<https://parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/ddfcb25d-ea31-4a37-86ba-daf1b4d6f032>

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