

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate use

HEATHROW SCARED OF MAKING EXPANSION AN ELECTION ISSUE

Heathrow admitted that they will not end the uncertainty to residents living around the Airport and is worried about the expansion of the Airport becoming an election issue, the Airport admitted on Tuesday.

Nigel Milton, Heathrow's Chief of Staff, told a meeting of the Local Community Forum, held at the Airport on Tuesday evening (16 January 2024), that plans for expanding the Airport were still being considered under its new CEO, but that "anything with Heathrow on it" would be controversial in an election period (1). This acts as a sure sign that Heathrow are planning to reinstate its third runway proposals once a general election is over, to the detriment to many people living around the airport, under its flight paths and for wider environmental reasons (2).

Heathrow will not want a third runway to be an election issue because of the extremely controversial nature of the project. During previous elections, such as in 2010, the proposals were amongst the main issues facing parties in marginal seats across west London.

More recently, the Conservatives have stated that the third runway will not receive any taxpayer funding (3) and Labour, who are currently leading opinion polls ahead of the election, have stated it does not meet the party's four tests (4).

Despite refusing to update local communities about over their plans for expansion, Heathrow recently met with the CAA to "*discuss the process for continuing its airspace change proposals in the context of any potential reactivation of its expansion programme.*" (5) It seems the airport continues to not be entirely honest with local communities. Indeed, in October 2023 the CAA prevented Heathrow from progressing its airspace change proposals for a two-runway airport due to concerns about the robustness of their stakeholder engagement. (6)

On Tuesday, more of Heathrow's shareholders announced they could sell their stakes in the airport, alongside the majority shareholder, Ferrovial, who announced plans to sell up in November (7). Should buyers not be found then the whole deal may collapse. Despite this risk Mr. Milton commented at the meeting the ownership of Heathrow would make no difference to its expansion timetable.

Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, said:

"The only real beneficiaries of Heathrow expansion would be Heathrow's shareholders - whomsoever they might be, after the current crop sell up after extracting maximum dividends by increasing the company's debt.

“To everyone else, the many communities who will be overflowed by yet more planes, and the regional airports whose viability will be undermined, Heathrow expansion can only be a tale of woe.

“So it’s hardly any wonder that the airport wishes to remove its controversial, self-interested desire to expand out of any pre- election debate”.

ENDS.

Notes:

- 1) Details of the Heathrow Community Forum <https://www.cisha.org/forums/project-two-llrgk-7g43j>
- 2) Reasons why a 3rd runway shouldn’t happen https://www.no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk/files/ugd/6eef7a_41ef7a0940d14ea9b8e5d2464a82fb6d.pdf
- 3) Government insist Heathrow is private sector project <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-07-13/debates/5D4A9B7E-D3E6-4312-B478-1ACEBE27D44E/HeathrowAirportExpansionFunding>
- 4) Labour to oppose a 3rd runway at Heathrow https://www.no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk/files/ugd/6eef7a_d109fc9db1844e7d9c79591f30243476.pdf
- 5) CAA Airspace Change Portal – London Heathrow Third Runway – 5th January 2024 <https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/PublicProposalArea?pID=24>
- 6) Develop and Assess Gateway Outcome – October 2023 <https://airspacechange.caa.co.uk/PublicProposalArea?pID=386>
- 7) More Heathrow shareholders to sell stake in airport <https://www.ft.com/content/2cebd6e9-4667-4141-8beb-43f5feec1a9f>

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