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For immediate use

LANDMARK RULING ON LIVE-STREAMING HEATHROW COURT CASE

An application to live stream a trial at the High Court on the expansion of Heathrow has been refused at a hearing on Tuesday.

Justice Hickinbottom ruled that the trial by five claimants (1), versus the Secretary of State for Transport – set to begin on 11 March for two weeks – could not be live streamed as the law dating from 1925, did not allow for proceedings within the court to be recorded. However, the court will seek to provide another large and accessible additional courtroom for members of the public wishing to watch the proceedings who won't be able to fit in Court 76. Tweeting from both courtrooms is also to be permitted.

Additionally, on application, screening of the proceedings in other courts around the country will be considered, an acknowledgment that case is of wide public interest, allowing those from other parts of the country to avoid considerable costs of attending the hearings in London – a point acknowledged by Justice Hickinbottom. Transcripts of proceedings will also be published, although it remains to be decided as to how costs of these scripts will be apportioned.

Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, representing hundreds of thousands of residents who would be negatively impacted by Heathrow expansion, said:

"Whilst we are disappointed with today's ruling, we welcome several outcomes such as allowing tweeting from the courtroom and potentially permitting screenings of the proceedings in other courts around the country.

"We are pleased that the judges recognised the merits of the case brought forward and the extent of concern at the government's decision to allow Heathrow to expand.

"This is why so many people consider themselves interested parties in these proceedings, and why a fair few of them will feel let down by this decision not to let them tune in. We will continue to explore legislative opportunities to bring what is a very out-dated law into the 21st Century."

Jackie Clark, Chair of the Stop Heathrow Expansion group, which is based in the areas that face demolition in the event that the new runway goes ahead, commented:

"Many residents who are set to lose their homes will want to follow the court proceedings closely but may not be able to physically attend the court for a whole range of reasons. So we will be urging claimants to submit an application."

ENDS.

Notes:

1. The hearing relates to a claim by Plan B Earth – a climate change charity who are a claimant in the case against the Government’s plans to expand Heathrow – who support a more open justice system on a case of wide public interest.

There are five claimants in the case; the first is the London Borough of Hillingdon (supported by the Mayor of London, the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, Hillingdon, Richmond and Wandsworth, the Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead and Greenpeace UK), Friends of the Earth, Twickenham resident Neil Spurrier and Heathrow Hub Ltd – a rival scheme for expanding Heathrow. The rolled-up trial begins on 11 March and is expected to last for two weeks.

For more information:

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