



Department
for Transport

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Grant Shapps

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HSPG Leaders
Heathrow Strategic Planning Group

c/o Alan Hesketh
alan@heathrowstrategicplanninggroup.com

9 July 2020

Dear Alan, et al,

Thank you for your email of 29 June, attaching a letter from the Heathrow Strategic Planning Group leaders, detailing their concerns about the impact of Covid-19 on the local communities around Heathrow Airport.

May I please start by stating that I fully recognise the critical role that aviation plays in the local communities and economies around Heathrow. The Government understands the challenging times facing the sector as a result of Covid-19. We are working closely with the sector to support it to ensure there is sufficient capacity to protect global travel routes, protect freight routes and to maintain vital connectivity.

Thank you for your interest in the International Aviation Taskforce. The Taskforce was established to reflect the unique challenges that sector is facing, with the remit of getting the sector moving again, safely, and when the science allows. This work is supported by an industry Expert Steering Group, with a broad representative membership, established through consultation with industry bodies and trade associations. Members were invited on the basis that they are there to represent the interests of sector as a whole, with a clear emphasis on being a working group to co-produce solutions with Government.

You may be aware that my Department recently published guidance for 'Safer travel and working principles for airports and aviation operators'. This guidance was developed with support of the Expert Steering Group, to help the industry manage risks from Covid-19 and provide safer workplaces and services for workers and passengers. Following this major milestone, the Group are continuing with the work of identifying what practical steps are required to restart the industry, as well as to consider what longer term steps are required towards full-sector recovery.

The Department has received a number of approaches to expand the scope and membership of the Group, but in order to react to the unique, and in some cases critical, challenges facing the sector, it is necessary to keep the Group's focus on the immediate industry in the short term.

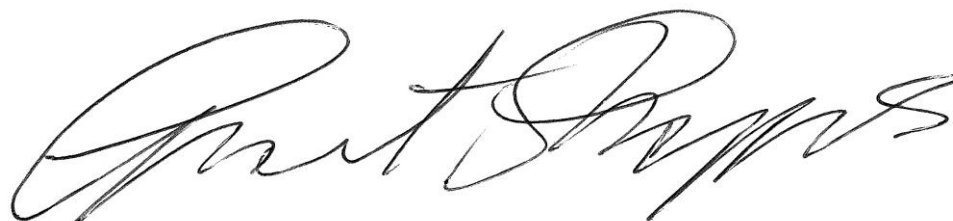
I share your concerns on the impacts on places and am acutely aware that many areas such as Heathrow, with large airports and supply chain jobs are particularly impacted at this time. Which is why I know we must support the sector to recover now, not just for the industry, but as a catalyst to protect jobs at the airport and in the supply chain, to best support local communities. I know that my officials have regular meetings with SASIG and we will want to stay in touch with the impact assessment study which they are undertaking.

Considering the future of the sector in terms of sustainability, the aviation sector must be a green one that creates high quality, skilled jobs. We are already looking at the recovery of the sector in the context of the Government's green ambitions. Covid-19 has meant people have had to profoundly change the way they live, work and travel, and it is clearly sensible that our plans to reduce emissions look to understand and take account of this. I have announced the formation of a new 'Jet Zero Council', which will bring together government, aviation and environmental groups to make net zero emission flights possible. There is determination within the industry to make this a part of the restart.

Thank you also for reiterating your support for the Western Rail Link and Southern Access to Heathrow schemes. We continue to support the development of the Western Rail Link to Heathrow subject to a satisfactory business case and the agreement of acceptable terms with the Heathrow aviation industry. For Southern Access work is continuing to develop a new commercial model. However, the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic means the market announcement will be made as soon as reasonably possible.

May I conclude by thanking you for raising these important matters with me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Grant Shapps', written in a cursive style.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT