

Heathrow Strategic Planning Group  
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Rt.Hon Grant Shapps  
Secretary of State  
Department for Transport  
Cc: Kelly Tolhurst, Aviation Minister

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Secretary of State

### **Impact of the downturn and the need to support affected local communities**

We are writing to express the seismic impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on local communities around airports, and business linked to the aviation industry, particularly around Heathrow airport.

Heathrow Strategic Planning Group (HSPG) is a partnership of 9 local authorities, 3 local enterprise partnerships and a regional park body around the airport. It was formed in 2015 to jointly shape the proposed expansion of Heathrow airport, regardless of individual members' support or opposition to it. Our current focus is recovery from the crisis, to ensure local communities and businesses reliant on the airport can quickly get back on their feet, whilst ensuring a better environment is also created.

Economically, not only is Heathrow Airport the most important airport in the UK by all measures and one of the largest employment sites in the UK, it is a vital part of our combined economies. The airport employs around 72,000 staff employed by more than 400 directly related companies. Together with other direct, indirect and induced jobs, it is estimated that there are approximately 114,000 local jobs related to the airport with around half of employees coming from neighbouring local communities. This does not include the significant catalytic impact of the airport on jobs and business growth. Hundreds of businesses in all sectors rely on the airport for their survival, including manufacturing, hospitality, freight, cargo and logistics. Plans for redundancies are coming thick and fast. Analysis shows aviation's recovery is likely to lag behind other sectors. In some areas, more than 50% of residents who work at Heathrow are in low skilled, low paid jobs – not only most at risk of redundancy but also most vulnerable to falling into further deprivation. People from a BAME background are highly represented in these vulnerable job sectors.

The impact of Heathrow's near closure will lead to massive impacts in our area. While we welcome your establishment of an industry-focussed aviation recovery taskforce we ask that it is **now broadened to include representation of aviation impacted communities** to inform and shape recovery, taking the opportunity to address longstanding environmental impacts of airports.

This taskforce should drive a programme of measures to support businesses linked to aviation, local communities and environmental improvement, specifically targeted to areas worst hit. A number of measures are likely to be necessary. These programmes could cover:

- **employment and skills programmes**, focused on reskilling and upskilling to ensure levelling up of those most vulnerable;
- **business support** to encourage entrepreneurship, diversification and new business models.
- investment in **infrastructure**, to drive growth and new jobs, and that fosters more sustainable communities and environment. We would urge your department to take forward the provision of **Western and Southern rail access**, expediently and sustainably.
- support for **innovation in green industries and jobs**;
- co-ordinated improvements to the **quality of the natural environment around the airport** and the wider area, and the extent and quality of **active travel routes** that serve the area; and
- **investigation of innovative funding models to provide funding for such community programmes**, as were being discussed prior to the current crisis.

The LEPs that are members of HSPG are leading Recovery and Renewal Plans building on their work last year on Local Industrial Strategies, and their active involvement in developing and implementing a programme of measures is important so that local actions can be identified. The LEPs will also be contacting Government for support in this regard.

Clearly, measures have to be evidence-based and HSPG and its members are collating data and information to inform the recovery measures necessary. HSPG is an associate member of the LGA's Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group (SASIG) which is currently undertaking an impact assessment of the downturn on airport regions nationally. DfT will hopefully engage with and endorse that work to inform national and area specific recovery plans.

A key focus for HSPG over the medium term is to take the opportunity to shape the future of Heathrow airport, ensuring that future operations are carried out in a more sustainable way, less impactful to local communities and environment. HSPG notes the letter from Rob Light, Head Commissioner of ICCAN of 20<sup>th</sup> May 2020. He states current events are "an opportunity for a re-think about the way aviation noise is considered when both strategic and operational decisions are taken about the future of aviation". HSPG would welcome this debate and would encourage Government to consider a re-think on a number of environmental issues in taking forward its Aviation Strategy 2050.

A national partnership approach to recovery for businesses and communities affected by the downturn in the aviation industry, whilst progressing environmental improvements, is essential. HSPG is ready to assist Government to develop and deliver this, and is keen to meet with Government and the taskforce We look forward to your response.

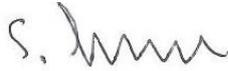
Yours sincerely,

#### **HSPG Leaders**

(signatures overleaf)

(Letter also sent to Kelly Tolhurst (Aviation Minister), BEIS and MHCLG)

**London Borough of Hounslow – Steve Curran, Leader of the Council**



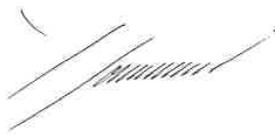
**London Borough of Ealing – Julian Bell, Leader of the Council**



**Slough Borough Council – James Swindlehurst, Leader of the Council**



**Spelthorne Borough Council – Daniel Mouawad – Chief Executive**



**Runnymede Borough Council – Nick Prescott – Leader of the Council**



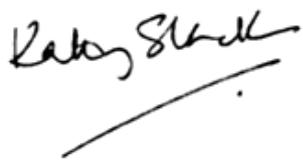
**Elmbridge Borough Council – Leader of the Council – Stuart J Selleck**



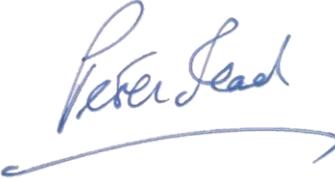
**Surrey County Council – Colin Kemp – Deputy Leader**



**Enterprise M3 LEP – Kathy Slack – Chief Executive**



**Thames Valley Berkshire LEP – Peter Read – Chairman**



**Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead – Jerry Clark - Lead Member for Transport and Infrastructure<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> HSPG members are Slough Borough Council, London Borough of Hounslow, London Borough of Ealing, Surrey County Council, Spelthorne Borough Council, Runnymede Borough Council, Elmbridge Borough Council, Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, Thames Valley Berks LEP, Enterprise M3 LEP, Colne Valley Park CIC, Bucks Thames Valley LEP and Buckinghamshire Council. The latter three are not signatories to this letter.