**PRESS RELEASE**

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*For immediate use*

**NEW EVIDENCE SHOWS CASE FOR THIRD RUNWAY FALLS FURTHER**

The case for expanding Heathrow was dealt yet another blow this week as figures reveal the number of domestic passengers using the airport falling by almost half a million.

Information released by the Civil Aviation Authority shows 471,000 fewer domestic passengers travelling through Heathrow Airport in 2016, representing a 9% decline. This compares to growth at every other London Airport, including 272,000, or 8%, more domestic passengers handled at Gatwick in the same period (1).

The Government’s support for plans to expand Heathrow was given on the basis of “support new connections to the UK’s regions, as well as safeguarding existing domestic routes” (2).

The 8 existing routes offered today are: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, Aberdeen, Belfast City, Manchester, Newcastle and Leeds Bradford. Heathrow proposed a further 6 new routes to Belfast, Liverpool, Newquay, Humberside, Prestwick and Durham Tees Valley to be added after expansion.

Yet evidence suggests that the survival of so many new, domestic routes, despite a marginal decrease in passenger duty which the airport announced recently, would be put into serious doubt without a form of Government subsidy. No proposals to provide financial assistance to these routes currently exist.

The news comes as British Airways announced that it was cutting half its services between Leeds Bradford Airport and Heathrow from summer 2018 (3). The company says it has had to take the decision to reduce the frequency of flights “to match demand”.

Leeds Bradford Airport said the news that BA was reducing the number of weekly flights from twenty to ten in each direction was “a blow to their hopes that Heathrow expansion plans would have attracted more people to Yorkshire”.

Campaigners and politicians argue that this new information undermines the Government’s case for supporting any expansion at Heathrow even further, given evidence revealed in the Department for Transport’s own figures that show economic growth would be greater at Gatwick Airport than at Heathrow, in the long term.

**Rob Barnstone, Coordinator of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, said:**

*“This is damning for both Heathrow and the Government, who are trying to sell a third runway based on better connections across the UK. The reality is, that without any financial support from the Government, evidence strongly suggests these new routes simply won’t have the demand to survive.*

*“Politicians should look at the evidence which shows Heathrow expansion is further than ever before from the economic prodigy that the Government and the Airport would let you believe.”*

**Ruth Cadbury MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heathrow Expansion, said:**

*“The reality is that whilst all other London airports are growing their domestic passenger traffic, Heathrow’s is falling. Surely that flies in the face of Heathrow’s claim that Runway 3 would deliver more domestic flights and serve more destinations?”*

*Ends.*

Notes

1. Civil Aviation Authority Data <http://www.caa.co.uk/uploadedFiles/CAA/Content/Standard_Content/Data_and_analysis/Datasets/Airport_stats/Airport_data_2016_annual/Table_10_2_Domestic_Terminal_Passenger_Traffic.pdf>

2. Government support for Heathrow <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-decides-on-new-runway-at-heathrow>

3. BA cuts Heathrow route <http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/15814820.leeds-bradford-airport-disappointed-as-british-airways-announces-flight-cuts-to-and-from-heathrow/>

For more information
Rob Barnstone, 07806947050, robert.barnstone@outlook.com