

Legal action on Heathrow will happen warn council leaders



The Leaders of three London councils have written to the new Secretary of State for Transport threatening legal action if the new cabinet gives Heathrow expansion the green light.

The Leaders of Richmond, Hillingdon and Wandsworth Councils wrote to Chris Grayling MP following reports that a decision on aviation capacity could be made in early September.

The Leader of Hillingdon Council, Cllr Ray Puddifoot, said: "I'm glad that the Secretary of State has made it clear that the government will

make this decision and not duck the responsibility for this issue any longer. Having been promised by the last Prime Minister that Heathrow would not be expanded and that the environment and the health and wellbeing of the people would take precedence over profit, I have every faith in Chris Grayling and Theresa May opposing expansion for the same reasons.

"There is a realistic and viable alternative in Gatwick, which could be delivered faster and with less damage to our environment and our people. However, Hillingdon along with other councils has prepared a substantial and strong legal challenge to any proposed expansion at Heathrow should the government renege on its promise."

The Leader of Richmond Council, Lord True, said: "Heathrow expansion - in either the form of the new north-west runway or the extension of the existing northern runway - would be an environmental disaster for our communities. Under both scenarios the costs far outweigh the benefits and we urge the Government to dismiss the inflated and implausible case made by the promoters of these schemes.

"The Prime Minister has spoken of her concern to protect communities and listen to the concerns of ordinary people. This is her first chance to prove it."

The Leader of Wandsworth Council, Ravi Govindia, said: "We have made it perfectly clear that we intend to launch a legal challenge if the Government resolves to support Heathrow expansion or to carry out any further investigatory works into these projects. Our residents have lived with this threat hanging over them for far too long.



“Heathrow expansion is unlawful, undeliverable and would create a severe political and social rupture at a time when our country desperately needs unity. Gatwick is a far better option on every level.”

The full letter is below:

Dear Secretary of State,
Congratulations on your appointment and we wish you every success in your new role.

We understand that aviation expansion will be one of the first major policy decisions before the cabinet and, as the Leaders of Hillingdon, Richmond and Wandsworth Councils we are writing to make our position on this issue entirely clear.

The Prime Minister has spoken of her concern to protect communities and listen to the concerns of ordinary people. Heathrow expansion - in either the form of the new north-west runway or the extension of the existing northern runway - would be an environmental disaster for our communities. Heathrow expansion of all the solutions ever suggested does the most to hurt communities and would blight the lives of more people than any other. Under both scenarios the costs far outweigh the benefits and we urge you to dismiss the inflated and implausible case made by the promoters of these schemes. We hope this will be an early example of Mrs May's commitment to protect both communities and the rights of ordinary people.

We all agree that after six years of dithering since a conservative Prime Minister rightly scrapped the 3rd Runway plan, we need a swift outcome. Heathrow expansion would be the slowest, as well as the most costly solution. Gatwick is far ahead in most respects.

We must also be very clear that we intend to launch a legal challenge against the Government in the unfortunate event that it resolves to support Heathrow expansion or to carry out any further investigatory works into these projects. Our arguments are set out in earlier correspondence (attached) and centre on the severe environmental damage that comes with a new or lengthened runway, and on the clear promises and policy commitments made to our communities by successive Governments.

Your commitment to rule on this issue in early September is very welcome indeed as the threat of Heathrow expansion has been held over our communities for far too long and it is high time they were granted the certainty they need to get on with their lives.

We hope you recognise that Heathrow expansion is unlawful, undeliverable and would create a severe political and social rupture at a time when our country desperately needs unity. Councils, MPs, environmental groups, the London Mayor and millions of ordinary Londoners will fight the Government every step of the way if it favours this option and we urge you again to choose the deliverable, lowest cost, safer option of Gatwick

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Ravi Govindia
Leader, Wandsworth Borough Council
Councillor Ray Puddifoot
Leader of Hillingdon Council
Councillor Lord Nicholas True
Leader of Richmond Council