

24 March 2021

Re: Support for Southampton Airport Planning Application for a Runway Extension

We write this open letter in support of the planning application by Southampton Airport for a short extension to the existing runway which will be considered by the Eastleigh Local Area Committee on Thursday 25th March 2021.

The Board of Solent Local Enterprise Partnership is clear that the extension to the runway within the perimeter of the airport is necessary for the viability of the airport and the future economic prosperity of the local economy.

The planning application for the runway is one of regional significance that will have deep implications for local businesses, local people and communities, and the future prosperity of our economy.

A decision to refuse the application risks bringing the 110 years of aviation in Eastleigh to an end. Our diverse communities will be disadvantaged, making it more difficult for people who live in our area to stay in touch with families and friends. It will be disastrous for the local economy at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is having a devastating economic impact; particularly in sectors that benefit from the connectivity that Southampton Airport provides - most notably our visitor economy.

Pre COVID, in the Solent and across Hampshire, the tourism and hospitality sector employed just under 100,000 people (over 11% of all employment), with 65,000 of these jobs in the Solent alone. The area attracts 43.5m visitor's p.a. spending £2.72bn and generating £3.27bn in total. The airport plays an important role in underpinning this significant economic activity, recognising that 40% of the airport passenger split in 2019 had leisure and cruise as the trip purpose.

The pre COVID passenger splits showed that 30% had a business purpose, evidencing the important role that the airport provides for the business community and jobs. The demand for air travel that Southampton can satisfy will not disappear, it will simply be displaced to airports such as Gatwick or Heathrow and increase costs, time and carbon.

Moreover, to refuse this application will be a decision to step away from an ambition to support the recovery the economy needs, to miss the chance to build back greener and actively drive the pathway to Net Zero aviation targets. Such a decision will have generational consequences, that will see our area and our young people left behind.

A decision to approve the application will be transformative, bringing fresh hope to a region that will see at least 28,000 jobs lost to the pandemic, countless businesses close, a visitor economy decimated and give our young people new hope and opportunity.



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Southampton Airport, with its focus on inter-regional connectivity, is ideally positioned to be at the leading edge of aviation technology to push forward low carbon travel, and drive the uptake of sustainable aviation fuels and develop the infrastructure of the future to place the Solent at the forefront of green planes. This is our opportunity to be at the vanguard of the transition of aviation to Jet Zero, and provide our young people with the opportunity to be the green engineers of tomorrow, not simply pass the issue on to another airport, exacerbating the carbon footprint, and appeasing a minority. The prize is significant, real, and is a decision away.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. R. Johnson".

Brian Johnson
Chair
Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anne-Marie Mountifield".

Anne-Marie Mountifield
Chief Executive
Solent Local Enterprise Partnership