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Importance: High

In a Radio 4 interview today I was asked to describe my reaction to this Government's decision to approve Heathrow expansion.

A weak, myopic and irresponsible Government was my response.

Weak :

- The Prime Minister is ultimately responsible for the policy and decisions of the government but the current PM, who argued so fervently against expansion, has simply abandoned that position. I refer to it as a position, for it cannot be regarded as a belief or conviction when so easily discarded. Little wonder the vast majority of the population considers that MPs may sometimes say what they mean but rarely, it seems, do they mean what they say (Zac Goldsmith being a commendable exception).
- A government prepared to prioritise short term commercial gain ahead of the health and wellbeing of hundreds of thousands of citizens whose lives are increasingly blighted by aircraft noise and pollution.
- A government which subsidises the aviation industry to the tune of billions of pounds a year by permitting exemptions from VAT and fuel duty, collection of which would far outweigh any of the fanciful economic claims made by those with a vested interest to expand. This is not a fledgling industry – why are taxpayers subsidising it?

Myopic:

- Ministers' responses that an expanded Heathrow 'shows the world that post Brexit UK is open for business' is frankly ludicrous.
- Any economic blip as a result of the people's decision to leave Europe pales into insignificance when contrasted with the actual cost of wholesale disruption to lives and environmental impacts for this generation and those to come.

Irresponsible :

- A move to expand aviation is incompatible with the UK's national and international climate obligations. The Airports Commission made several assumptions about future efficiency improvements which are consistently more optimistic than those made by the government and the government's advisory body, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), without presenting adequate evidence to explain the rationale behind this divergence. So who is right and if you do not know, is it not your responsibility to err on the side of caution given the health and environmental implications?
- An estimated 70 per cent of flights in 2013 were taken by just 15 per cent of the population and yet 100% of the UK population (and indeed the world's populations) will pay the real cost of increased pollution.
- At a time when road users are being encouraged to clean up their act (and indeed penalised for failure to do so) government appears willing to hand the benefits gained to the aviation industry free of charge! If reduction in emissions is an objective – then **ALL**

forms of industry and transport must make equal contributions, not use one gain to offset those of the aviation industry in order that it can manipulate figures to achieve its purely commercial ambitions.

An opportunity presented itself for the UK to be innovative, forward thinking, demonstrate its commitment to reduce emissions as well as radically review air and travel infrastructure as a whole – an opportunity on which this government failed capitalise. It will be judged accordingly and rightly so.

Opposition by those detrimentally affected by HAL's operation is determined, organised and greater than at any time in the past and still growing.

A third runway is undeliverable and will be dogged by years of opposition, legal challenge and protest. It failed before, it will fail again.

Regards

Rosalie James

Chair - Aircraft Noise 3 Villages

(Lightwater, Windlesham & Bagshot)