

MPs TOLD HEATHROW EXPANSION VITAL TO SCOTTISH ECONOMY

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry has urged MPs not to overlook the importance of a third runway at Heathrow to the Scottish economy. **Ahead of this afternoon's debate on the issue at Westminster (15.30 on 11 November), Lesley Sawers, SCDI Chief Executive, said:**

"Access to international flights is absolutely crucial to Scotland's competitiveness, and to growing the numbers of Scottish businesses with a global presence.

"However, we know that Scotland is unlikely to attract many more medium and long haul flights due to the size of the market, so links to Heathrow's routes to India, China, Africa and the West Coast of the USA are essential for businesses operating in these markets.

"Heathrow's international route network is a national asset that is therefore every bit as important to Scotland's future as it is to London's.

"But with the airport now at 99 per cent capacity, the number of Scottish routes served by Heathrow is declining as airlines use scarce remaining slots to concentrate on the most profitable routes, removing vital links to Scottish regions. The number of UK domestic routes served by Heathrow has more than halved from 21 to 8 since 1990."

Dr Sawers disagreed that high speed rail would remove the need for a third runway:

"High speed rail links would also provide a great boost to Scotland's connectivity, but rail is not a practical alternative for many Scottish destinations in the way it may be for Manchester or Liverpool.

"And rail links to the centre of London are certainly not an option for business travellers wanting to connect to an onward international flight. Air links to Heathrow are the only quick and easy access to the global marketplace.

"An additional runway is urgently needed, and we urge MPs of all parties to support the expansion of Heathrow, and the major economic benefits this will bring to Scotland and the rest of the UK."

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