

Local Woking business believes Heathrow expansion makes good business sense

“If the Government wants to grow its airport capacity, Heathrow is the only place to do it.”

This is the view of Stuart McOnie, Managing Director of Semmco, a leading employer in the Woking area who has come out in public support of the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

This is the first in a series of public statements of business support for Heathrow Airport which the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership will be publishing over the next few months.

Enterprise M3, along with four other organisations from the area known as the “the Western Edge”, has recently produced the London Heathrow Economic Impact Study, which revealed how an extra 35,000 jobs could be created by 2040 if Heathrow expanded and that the region would see an annual GVA boost of £3 billion as a result of the extra activity at Heathrow.

Although these statistics, which have been submitted to the Davies Commission reporting on aviation capacity are important, Enterprise M3 believes that the views and opinions of real business people are also needed to inform the debate on the UK’s aviation needs.

Stuart McOnie’s view on Heathrow

“If the Government wants to grow its airport capacity, and I definitely think it needs to, Heathrow is the only place to do it. It is an established airport hub with established transport links both around and into London.

When asked about alternative plans for airport expansion, such as those of Boris Johnson, Mayor of London Stuart was not in favour: “I think that building a new airport to the east of London, and closing Heathrow as a result, is a bad idea. Our country currently doesn’t have the infrastructure capacity in that area to deal with a new airport. This new site would lead to an increase in travel times for 90% of passengers.

“From a personal point of view, closing Heathrow and opening a completely new airport would severely impact on my business. Heathrow is currently very important to my business. We have contracts based out of Heathrow with leading air operators, including British Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Cathay Pacific and Air Canada, and if they moved to another airport, I would seriously have to consider moving my business, which employs 29 people, out of the Woking area to ensure that I would service my contracts effectively.

“I really think that expanding Heathrow Airport is the only sensible way to go. It is not just the extra jobs that would be created that we should bear in mind but the additional 170,000 to 230,000 jobs that are dependent on the good air connections offered by Heathrow.

In business, we know that 80% of our business comes from 20% of our customers and therefore we invest time and money in this successful 20%. The UK Government should think about using the same logic when it comes to investing in airports. If I was a politician and I ran the country the way I run my business, growing an already successful airport like Heathrow would definitely be the only way I would go!”