

The Rgt Honourable Boris Johnson MP  
Prime Minister  
Office of the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London  
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**Democratic Services**  
**London Borough of Hounslow**  
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**Leader of the Council**

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Date: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

**Re: Supporting local communities impacted by the aviation downturn**

I am writing to convey the disastrous impact the recent downturn in aviation activity, as a result of the current pandemic, is having on the local economy and health and wellbeing of residents in the London Borough of Hounslow.

Before COVID-19, Hounslow had one of the highest levels of growth, generating nearly £13 billion in Gross Value Added and adding some £5.5 billion to the UK economy. Hounslow benefited from an employment base of 164,000 jobs. One-in-four jobs were in the transport and storage sector, 70% of this via Heathrow. Passenger flights are down over 95%, air freight handling 50-75%. Tens of thousands of staff employed at Heathrow, and in the supply chain, are in furlough. Announcements of redundancies are coming in thick and fast. The data we have, based on the Office for Budget Responsibility scenarios, predicts **Hounslow will be the second worst effected economy in London, with a 40% decline in output.**

We have recorded a 400% increase in Council Tax Support applications, and 200% increase in changes in circumstances in April 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. We know that more than a quarter of employees in the borough earn below the London Living Wage, many of these employed at Heathrow. The downturn will have significant impact on the some of the most vulnerable communities in the country. This impact could become a vicious circle of long-lasting decline if not appropriately addressed at the right time.

Given this, I am writing today with two immediate asks of Government. Firstly, we ask that **the current industry focused aviation taskforce is expanded** to include Hounslow Council and other similarly impacted local authorities across the UK, building on existing sub-regional and national bodies. The huge impact which will be seen in **local communities** reliant on the aviation industry needs to be recognised and action taken. We are ready to assist setting up this coalition.

This partnership **should inform a programme of work** that will see businesses and communities prosper again and drive a more sustainable regrowth. There are clearly a number of needed interventions: skills and employment programmes, infrastructure investment, and sector specific business support. Evidence is needed to target their effectiveness. The Council has commissioned our own impact assessment via Oxford Economics, and we are working with a national consortium of Local Authorities, via the LGA's Aviation Group, to understand the sector wide issues. Initial outputs, expected early this month, can inform the taskforce's work.

The taskforce should also look to reinvigorate some of **the innovative and self-funding proposals**, being discussed before the crisis, on how to fund community programmes to support communities impacted by aviation.

Secondly, **we would urge the Government to remove the 14-day quarantine as soon as it is safely able to do so**. Instead of a catch-all quarantine we would like to see the introduction as quickly as possible of a flexible and risk-based approach that allows free movement between countries with low transmission levels, requires additional testing from medium risk countries, and asks higher risk countries to quarantine on arrival. **A more targeted approach** would give the industry a roadmap for when different markets might reopen, so Heathrow and local businesses can plan with confidence. This will save jobs and businesses.

With swift Government intervention we can develop a new long-term partnership for sustainable aviation growth, job creation and regeneration. I look forward to your response.

Given the urgency of the situation, I would be very grateful if we could meet as soon as possible. If you or your officials require further information, please do not hesitate to contact my Chief Executive, Niall Bolger on 07749 502003, [niall.bolger@hounslow.gov.uk](mailto:niall.bolger@hounslow.gov.uk).

Yours sincerely



**Cllr Steve Curran**  
**Leader of the Council**

**cc:** Robert Jenrick, Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Minister for London  
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