

HENRY SMITH MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

11th May 2020

Dear Prime Minister

Urgent COVID-19 support for the aviation sector

As Members of Parliament for constituencies in West Sussex we are writing to urge the Government to support this county's economy through specific aviation sector assistance.

Our county is the home of Gatwick Airport, which has been severely affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

We welcome the unprecedented support which has already been provided at this time such as the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, the range of grants and loans which are available to businesses, as well as the strengthening of Universal Credit.

This support is welcome, however further assistance from Government will be necessary if the economic success we have seen over the last decade is to return in the years ahead, not just for our local communities but UK-wide, as a global, island trading nation competing with our European neighbours.

Any support should be on a company-by-company basis. We recognise that any loans would need to be paid back to ensure protection for taxpayers.

Employees from West Sussex and further afield travel to work at Gatwick Airport and related businesses every day. Without specific assistance for the aviation sector, there is a danger that many will not have jobs to return to when this crisis is over.

Crawley, for example, is one of the economic powerhouses of the south east of England. Before the outbreak of COVID-19, the Crawley economy had grown by 23 per cent from 2013 to 2020; the highest in West Sussex, contributing over a quarter of the county's economic output, despite being just two per cent of the landmass.

Support for this industry is about more than those brands and personalities which are household names. The knock-on effects of COVID-19 go far beyond affecting any one community, the aviation sector affects the people in each of our parliamentary constituencies.

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We write not just on behalf of airline employees, but other airport workers in the area including security staff, baggage handlers, and workers at the countless shops and restaurants no longer operating.

Together we are asking for your support for this sector so that one day they can go back to work, customers can board planes again, and Gatwick can return to its rightful place as West Sussex's gateway to the world.

Yours ever



Henry Smith
Member of Parliament for Crawley



Sir Peter Bottomley
Member of Parliament for Worthing West



Andrew Griffith
Member of Parliament for Arundel & South Downs



Tim Loughton
Member of Parliament for East Worthing & Shoreham