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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE AIR LEAGUE CALLS FOR MEASURES TO SECURE THE LONGTERM FUTURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM'S AVIATION INDUSTRY

Future Skills in the Aviation Industry

The aviation and aerospace sectors are nationally significant industries and amongst the UK's largest sectors. The last two weeks or so, has seen the cancellation of the Farnborough Air Show, The Royal International Air Tattoo, as well as the RAF Cosford air show and the cessation of the RAF Air Cadets activities, until further notice. There will therefore, be little opportunity for young people to be engaged by the aviation and aerospace industries in 2020. These are inspiring sectors with highly paid, highly skilled jobs, and prospects which are easily transferable in the global economy. The Air League is concerned that a significant proportion of young people aged 13-18 will be unable to access their career choices as a result of current disruption and this will have a considerable impact on the number of applications to study at degree level or work in apprenticeships in the next few years. The third sector, government, industry and the education system needs to work together in a co-ordinated way across the UK to create opportunities, to engage young people to fill the damaging void left by the cancellation of so many 2020 activities.

General Aviation

The General Aviation (GA) community is the grass roots or lifeblood of aviation and fundamentally important to the future of the industry. It trains the pilots and aircrew needed to supply future growth across the globe (estimated at 650k in the next 20 years). The Air League is concerned that this segment of the industry could largely collapse if not appropriately supported. The UK's aviation training companies aid exports through delivering pilots to many global airlines and consideration should be given to supporting training institutions, in order to break the boom and bust cycle of aviation training. The sector is already under strain from airfield redevelopment plans which are diminishing the capacity of the GA community. Pilot training is an essential role of GA and already the UK struggles to produce enough pilots to meet demand. The Air League is concerned by the impact of COVID-19 from a pilot training perspective, the scale of the problem can only be estimated at the moment, though based on the 9/11 experience, this will last for several years.

The Environment

The current circumstances present an opportunity to drive the de-carbonisation agenda in a way which positions the UK for the future, as older and less fuel-efficient aircraft may be taken out of service earlier and replaced with more efficient models. Historically, as with after 9/11, some older and less fuel-efficient aircraft will not re-enter service. While it is tempting for some to think that current restrictions on air travel will help with decarbonisation, the long term picture is for airline passenger growth. This is unlikely to be stemmed. However, without revenues enabling the industry to invest in the next generation of aircraft with the latest engines and systems, the progressive and innovative approach taken by the industry in recent years will be dramatically curtailed.

The UK can take a lead in sustainable aviation activities, and link these to the COP26 conference at the end of this year. The industry has made great strides forward, in electrification and alternative fuels which will greatly reduce aviation's carbon impact and it is important that R&D momentum and the commercialisation of technologies from SME's is not lost. The UK must be bold: the crucial point here is that these technologies are continuing to develop and the UK should be a leader in this activity. Sustainable aviation initiatives should be nurtured with R&D and innovation grants to ensure that they can be made commercially attractive.

About the Air League

The Air League is a sector leading aviation and aerospace charity focused on changing lives through aviation. Its core purpose is to inspire people into the aviation industry from all backgrounds and to champion the British Aviation and Aerospace Industry. Each year many hundreds of people from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from Air League support to help them start a career, builds self-esteem and well-being, make them feel valued and realise what they can achieve.

The Air League fosters interest in the whole field of aviation, aerospace and defence, particularly in developing young people and providing opportunities for the less advantaged. The Air League supports the UK's aviation and aerospace communities through the Leading Edge, Air League in Parliament, receptions, lectures and policy papers which articulate the advanced technologies and crucial industry skills which are vital to the economic success of the UK.

The Air League is also the UK's largest provider of flying scholarships and bursaries. Over the past decade, Scholarships worth over £2 million have been allocated to young people across the UK. The Leading Edge is designed for members aged under 35 years and complements the Air League Trust's formal scholarships and bursaries programmes and acts as a wider network for people interested in flying or wanting to pursue a career in aviation.

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