



Liberal Democrats for Seekers of Sanctuary

23 Lincoln Road, Hindley, Wigan. WN2 3QY

johnskipworth038@btinternet.com (correspondence)

info@ld4sos.org.uk

www.ld4sos.org.uk

facebook.com/ld4sos

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President Lord Roger Roberts of Llandudno

LD4SOS POSITION ON DETENTION CENTRES AFFECTED BY HEATHROW EXPANSION.

We remain absolutely committed to our policy of detention as a last resort, and the closure of 8 out of 10 detention centres. Consequently we opposed the proposal to build a large new 1000 place detention centre at Heathrow to replace the two affected by the proposed 3 runway.

However we were concerned that if there was no detention centre at all at Heathrow, it would mean that anyone who absolutely has to be returned to their country of origin would be faced with what could be a long journey from where they have been living, before being put onto a plane. It might, therefore, be necessary to provide a much smaller purpose built facility solely to hold people for a few days before they were put on a plane.

We are delighted that the courts have ruled against the expansion. Assuming it does not go ahead, there should still be a review of how many detention places are actually needed in the Heathrow area as a properly run, humane asylum system, where detention is time limited and only used as a very last resort, simply does not need those two large centres. The funds freed up could be invested in community-based alternatives to detention which appear to have worked well in other countries.

We are also very concerned about the conditions in the short term holding facility and Cayley House within Heathrow, as described in this report by the Independent Monitoring Board. <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/imb-prod-storage-1ocod6bqky0vo/uploads/2018/04/Heathrow-IRC-2017-AR.pdf> (or a link from <https://www.imb.org.uk/heathrow-irc-annual-report-published-today/>). We are particularly concerned about the facilities for children. Action must be taken on this problem that little is known about, and the improvements needed for those landing at Heathrow that are not seeking asylum, as well as those that are, could be incorporated to a proper standard in a much reduced size new detention centre.