INTERVIEW WITH:
PATRICK MCLoughlin MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR TRANSPORT

JEREMY VINE: Well thank you, the government’s about to take delivery of a report on airport expansion, most people will think it needs to happen but where? During the last election the Prime Minister toured constituencies in West London and said there definitely would not be a third runway at Heathrow; now it seems that option will be recommended and so the question is whether the government says ‘no’ or performs the aerial equivalent of a U Turn. The man in the hot seat is the transport secretary Patrick McLoughlin and he joins me now from our Derby studio; so, looks like it’s Heathrow then.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: Now, I don’t, er, I don’t think it does look like it’s Heathrow at all. What we did just over 12 months ago when I became Secretary of State for Transport was we asked Howard Davis to set up a Commission, that Commission will report with an interim report this week and er will come out with its final report in 18 months.

JEREMY VINE: Sure but the Prime Minister at the last election said ‘No Ifs No Buts No Heathrow Expansion’ you even put it in your manifesto so I’m presuming that Heathrow and a third runway is off the table.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: Well what was on the table before was that the Labour Party were committed to building a third runway at Heathrow. What has happened since we set up the Davis Commission is all the parties, Gatwick Airport, Stansted Airport, the Mayor of London have come forward with different proposals. Heathrow themselves have come forward with many different proposals actually for what should happen at Heathrow, they’ve come forward with three different options as to what might be possible at Heathrow... (interjection)

JEREMY VINE: They’re all Heathrow.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: ... and I think it’s right that we haven’t ... sorry?
JEREMY VINE: They’re all Heathrow. Everything’s got a bit of Heathrow in it but you’ve ruled it out, that’s what I’m saying.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: Now look, no, I said Heathrow Airport themselves have come up with three different options. We haven’t ruled anything out. We’ve asked the Commission to look at this problem, a problem which has been caused for aviation capacity, for the last ten, twelve years, while it’s been discussed. Everybody has come forward with very different proposals and we’ll see what the Commission says this week and then we’ve got to also listen to what other people are saying as well. So we’ve got to take very important considerations of the environmental consequences of any of the proposals which may come forward.

JEREMY VINE: But your colleague, Zac Goldsmith, MP in Richmond said that if you go for Heathrow after all this, it will be quite an off the scale betrayal. He said the Prime Minister will never be forgiven in West London. That will probably make you laugh in Derby, but he might mind that.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: Well look, the Prime Minister takes the points about the environment incredibly serious; the whole government takes the points about environment very serious and we will want to look at it but what’s very important is actually we plan for the long-term future of the United Kingdom. If we’re going to compete in a global race, if we’re going to have the right, long-term future for the United Kingdom, we must make sure this country is not left behind. And that’s why, you know, we’ll look at what Boris Johnson has been putting forward, what Gatwick Airport has put forward, what Stansted has put forward, what Heathrow has put forward. There are lots of different options that are available for us. What’s important both for the government and indeed as far as the Commission is concerned is we come forward with the right, long-term answer for this problem, which has been around for some time.

JEREMY VINE: Heathrow is back on the table.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: The whole question of aviation capacity is back on the table for the longer term future. I think one of the things that will be clear when we’ve seen the report from Howard Davis is that it’s not an immediate problem, it is something that we’ve got to get right, we’ve got the time to get it right and that’s what we’re doing. It’s a long-term solution for the best of the United Kingdom. Aircrafts themselves are changing quite a lot, they are becoming quieter, they’re becoming more fuel efficient, so it is right that we judge the whole environmental aspects and get the right solution, for the United Kingdom, not just for London but for the United Kingdom as well.
JEREMY VINE: I’m sorry to keep throwing this Heathrow thing at you but because it was in your Manifesto, because you specifically ruled it out, because the Prime Minister ruled it out when he toured West London and because Boris Johnson, the Mayor of London, says that if you bring it back in it’s scandalous. I just want to be absolutely clear that it is back in as an option, despite everything you’ve said.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: We’ve set up a Commission to look at the long-term future of the whole of aviation for the South East. That is what the Davis Commission is doing. What we said at the last General Election was that we would not build a third runway in this parliament. We will not be building a third runway in this parliament. We will stick by our Manifesto commitment. But it is right, for the long term future of the United Kingdom, we have a panel of experts who will widely be regarded as coming, as doing a proper and comprehensive job and I want to see what their interim report is on this week and their final report in eighteen months’ time. And then we’ll be able to say which is the right way to go forward.

JEREMY VINE: And maybe go for Heathrow in the long-term.

PATRICK MCLoughlin: Well you seem more obsessed about Heathrow than I am. I want ... (interjection)

JEREMY VINE: Everyone’s obsessed about it ...

PATRICK MCLoughlin: ... the Commission to look at all the options in the South East. Indeed they are but let’s wait and see what the Commission say in the longer term.

JEREMY VINE: Alright. Thank you very much indeed for joining us this Sunday morning. Patrick McLoughlin from Derby. Nice to see you.

END OF INTERVIEW WITH PATRICK MCLoughlin