

My Lord Mayor, Grand Master, Mr Recorder, fellow Liverymen, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen ...

We are privileged to hold our Livery Dinner at Mansion House and are especially pleased that you, my Lord Mayor, join us this evening in *locum tenens*.

We enjoyed your company in your year of office and, as the son of a Wing Commander who spent your childhood attached to RAF stations here and abroad, we regard you as one of us.

- Present cheque for Lord Mayor's Charity Appeal.

Britain can be justifiably proud of its achievements in both military and civil aviation.

Three years ago, we marked the 70th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. This year, we mark the 70th Anniversary of the Dambusters' raid by 617 Squadron.

Air power is as important today as it ever was. It isn't an optional luxury; it is a defining capability.

We are proud to have many former and current members of the Royal Air Force, the Fleet Air Arm and the Army Air Corps in our Company and proud to have close and active affiliations with Units in each – some of which are represented here this evening.

Just as we remember with pride the bravery and skill of our pilots, navigators and crewmen 70 or so years ago, we salute the bravery and skill of our fellow pilots and other flight crew in today's armed services.

Commercial aviation is another British success story.

Aviation makes a significant contribution to the economy through its direct and indirect contribution to GDP.

The Government appears to accept the importance of ensuring that

the UK is one of the best connected countries in the world so that we can compete successfully for economic growth opportunities.

However, one could be forgiven for regarding such declarations as rhetoric when one considers:

- The failure of successive governments to have coherent programme for the development of the UK's airports.
- Numerous plans to expand capacity have been approved by one government, only to be cancelled by its successor – or even by the same government which announced the plan.
- The lack of any plans for an integrated transport policy linking road, rail and air.
- The imposition of an increasingly oppressive Air Passenger Duty upon long-haul flights departing from Heathrow

Connectivity is the lifeblood of trade. Our aviation networks must have the capacity to serve both existing and emerging markets. Our competitors understand this and did something about it while the UK talked about it. The UK is still talking about it!

My Lord Mayor, in your year of office, you called upon each of Britain's political parties to commit publicly to growth by creating a business environment of predictability, stability and clarity.

We now call upon them to commit publicly to growth:

Firstly, by taking urgent action now to ensure that we keep a major hub airport in the UK and stem the flow of domestic, international transit and global business travellers to alternative hubs on the continent and elsewhere. If action is not taken now, it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to re-establish our position.

In the short term, the only viable option is to increase capacity at Heathrow by one or more of the means suggested by the Guild in its recently published position paper.

Secondly we call upon them to agree upon a comprehensive integrated transport policy that will meet the needs of industry and business well into the 21st Century.

At the moment, I am able to speak proudly of Britain's past and present aviation achievements. I hope that in 30, 40, 50 or more years' time my successors as Master won't be reduced to reminiscing about 'the good old days' of British aviation, and ruing what might have been.

Grand Master, we are honoured that you are able to join us this evening. We welcome you, Sir, not as a guest but as a fellow Liveryman of our company who served 22 years in the Royal Navy as a helicopter pilot.

The keen interest you take in the work of the Guild does not go unnoticed. Far from it; it means a great deal to us and we thank you.

By now, some Liverymen will have been having palpitations, worrying that I've forgotten to mention you in my speech. And I know some of our Past Masters will be hoping to be at the front of the queue to tick me off for not doing so at the beginning of my speech.

You Sir, know the reason.

The IPM, Learned Clerk and I were honoured to be received by the Grand Master at Buckingham Palace immediately following my becoming Master. His Royal Highness showed great interest in the work of our Guild, as did our Patron when he received the IPM last December to discuss a working-group proposal that we should change our name when seeking a Royal Charter.

Fellow Liverymen, I am delighted to announce this evening that Her Majesty has graciously approved a proposal, made jointly by our Patron and Grand Master, that we should be known as '**The Honourable Company of Air Pilots**'.

We are not alone amongst livery companies in having Royal support and patronage, but we are unique in one respect. I cannot improve upon the Grand Master's own words when he explained why our Patron and he had made the proposal.

Referring to the Royal Family, His Royal Highness said:

"We are pilots. The Duke of Edinburgh was the first Royal pilot. I was a professional pilot. Prince William and Prince Harry are professional pilots. It is entirely appropriate."

May I thank you Sir, and ask you to convey our gratitude to our Patron, for jointly instigating the process which has led to Her Majesty bestowing this great honour upon us.

I had already decided upon my toast for this evening before we received this wonderful news. We now have even greater reason!

May I ask you all to be upstanding and join me in toasting: '**Pride in the Profession**'