

Stansted Inquiry postponed - common sense beginning to prevail

Stop Stansted Expansion welcomed the decision by Hazel Blears, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, on 2nd March, to postpone the start of the Public Inquiry into BAA's plans for a 2nd Stansted runway which had been due to start on 15th April.



Protestors outside the High Court for the SSE appeal

SSE had made formal representations for a deferral of the start date of the Inquiry because of the unfairness of pressing ahead with the hearing before key matters were resolved. These included the result of SSE's High Court Appeal into the decision to permit an increase of 10 million passengers a year on the existing runway - and the implications of the Competition Commission's impending report on the future ownership of Stansted, which is expected later this month.

A revised start date has not yet been decided. The Competition Commission's final report on its market investigation into BAA is expected to confirm the Commission's provisional view that BAA must sell Stansted. The Secretary of State will make an announcement on the revised start date within 4 weeks of the Competition

Commission's report, and will then provide at least 8 weeks notice before the start of the Inquiry.

SSE also welcomed the Inspector's recommendations that the Inquiry should not have concurrent sessions, which would have been manifestly unfair to airport opponents, and that its likely duration will be 18 months, compared to the 6 months originally envisaged. The Inquiry is now unlikely to be completed before the end of 2010 which means that a Government decision could not be made until the middle of 2011 at the earliest, recognising that the Inspector will need several months to write his report and submit his recommendations.

SSE believes the Inquiry is at best premature and likely to be a waste of everyone's time and money, because:

- Stansted is now handling fewer flights than at any time in the past 5 years. The runway is operating at less than half of its capacity and so why should a second runway be needed now?
- The Stansted Airlines, including Ryanair and easyJet are fiercely opposed to BAA's 2nd runway plans, and when BAA no longer owns the airport, it is unlikely a new purchaser would wish to press ahead with the current plans.
- A General Election must be held by June 2010 and both of the main opposition parties are pledged to cancelling the plans for a second Stansted runway.
- It is not yet clear whether the permission BAA obtained last year to increase its usage of the existing runway will be confirmed. SSE's appeal against this permission was heard in the High Court on 24th to 27th February, and the Judge's decision is expected by mid March.

Stansted second runway earliest date now 2017 - 6 years behind

In a letter sent by its solicitors to SSE and others preparing for the second runway Public Inquiry, BAA has said that the planned opening date of 2015 (assuming the grant of planning permission) has yet again been put back, this time until 2017.

The original expectation outlined in the Government's 2003 Air Transport White Paper was that a second Stansted runway should be built by 2011/12. This date has repeatedly slipped ever since. For example:

- * "New runway project is on target for completion in 2012" (BAA press release, 24 September 2004)
- * "New Stansted Runway on track for 2013" (BAA press release, 18 May 2005)
- * "Second runway on course for 2015" (BAA press release, 11 March 2008)
- * "In view of the change to the assumed opening year from 2015 to 2017..." (BAA - 18 February 2009)

more details on the SSE website: www.stopstanstedexpansion.com

Heathrow update: more protests, more obfuscation, and a Bill



Campaigners outside Downing Street

In mid-February hundreds of campaigners demonstrated outside Downing Street against the 'Brown Runway' at an event organised by the Campaign against Climate Change as part of the continuing fight against the 3rd runway at Heathrow. With the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats both pledging they will scrap plans for a 3rd runway, if they gain power at the General Election (due by June 2010) campaigners are increasingly confident of victory. Our strategy over the next year is to keep up the pressure and to counter the black propaganda being put about by BAA that a third runway is inevitable. A legal challenge to the decision is likely later this month or early April.

The next event is on March 23rd when WeCAN, part of Heathrow Coalition, is holding a Westminster Rally and Lobby (focussing on airport expansion and coal) at 5pm in the gardens beside the Lords on Millbank. A key focus will be children and their future. Children are encouraged to attend. After a short rally in the park with speakers, including Zac Goldsmith, a number of people, including the children, will go into Parliament to lobby MPs. (Details at: <http://www.wecan.uk.com/upcoming-actions>) (by John Stewart)

And we won't be able to resist doing something on the 1st anniversary of Terminal 5 on 27th March!

Ministers 'ignored' Heathrow dissent - 86% were opposed

Analysis of the responses on the Heathrow consultation shows that up to 86% of the people who responded to the government's call for comments were strongly opposed to the runway, but the government said it was only 37%. If confirmed, the findings would cast doubts over the consultation, suggesting it was designed to create the appearance of a democratic process when ministers had made their decisions in advance.

The plan to build a third runway would increase the number of flights using Heathrow from about 480,000 a year to 702,000 by 2030. Hoon backed his announcement in January, to give the go-ahead to the runway, with the publication of a report, "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport: Report on Consultation Responses", which suggested 37% of respondents were opposed to expansion. The Conservatives' analysis shows, however, that the government figure excluded 43,000 comments received in the form of campaign postcards and petitions – even though they constituted 62% of the total comments received.

If they had been included, about 86% of the responses would have been directly opposed to the expansion.

The DfT said: "The decision to support a third runway had already been taken in 2003, so the Heathrow consultation did not explicitly ask people whether they were in favour of a third runway or not."

Susan Kramer wins support for airport expansion bill

On 24th February, a 10 Minute Rule Bill, introduced by the Liberal Democrat MP Susan Kramer, calling for all new runways to require the approval of Parliament, was given its first reading. The Bill is unlikely to become law but it keeps the pressure on the Government and the third runway in the public eye. Its second reading will be on 20th March. Under the Airport Expansion Parliamentary Approval Bill parliamentary votes would be required for all major airport expansion schemes. Susan has introduced the bill because of the potential impact of Heathrow expansion on the environment, and on the rights of parliament.

There are lot of recent news stories about Heathrow at: http://www.airportwatch.org.uk/news/detail.php?art_id=2662

Plane Stupid Scotland shuts Aberdeen airport



Nine Plane Stupid Scotland protesters shut down Aberdeen airport by setting up a golf course on the taxiway. They surrounded themselves with fortified security fencing whilst others occupied the roof of the terminal building and unfurled a banner reading, "Nae Trump Games with Climate Change". The peaceful protest began at 2.15am whilst the runway was closed. The protest delayed the scheduled opening of the airport at 5am, until 9am.

Flights to Heathrow, Paris and Amsterdam were among those delayed by the protest. Some flights were cancelled and some passengers missed connecting flights. The aim of the protest was to prevent the release

of thousands of tonnes of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere. The campaigners chose to close Aberdeen after the Scottish government gave its backing to the expansion of capacity at the airport by 1.5 million passengers by 2015. Nine were arrested and held overnight. 3.3.2009

90 Jobs to go at Manchester Airport

(From SEMA). The Stop Expansion at Manchester airport group (SEMA) is not revelling in the statements coming out of the airport recently. Ninety jobs to go in the initial wave of redundancies at Manchester Airport. SEMA's campaign is not against the workers, but against reckless airport expansion with a view to unlimited economic growth at the expense of our planet. The airport seems to have shown as little regard for the wages and working conditions of their staff as they do for our planet and this is most evident when they are faced with a choice between their profits and people's welfare. "The City Council agrees that global rates of air traffic growth are unsustainable in the long term" according to Manchester City Council who own 55% of the airport. However, despite this statement, the Council and MAG support the Airport's Master Plan to double passenger numbers and will continue blindly on this path once this recession passes. Things are in flux, and the Council has admitted that aviation is a problem but is unwilling to take 'unilateral action'. Effectively they are passing the buck. We must move our economy away from carbon intensive industries such as aviation, rather than continuing to invest in jobs with no futures. The economic arguments put forward by Manchester Airport to expand their air freight facilities by the demolition of Rose Cottage look even more short sighted than ever

http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/s/1099331_90_airport_jobs_to_go 26.2.2009

For more on Manchester, see SEMA's blogspot at <http://www.stopmanchesterairport.blogspot.com>

Leeds Bradford terminal extension

Leeds Bradford Airport have applied for permission for an extension to their terminal building to provide more shops and bars but more importantly to increase passenger numbers by almost 70% in four years, from 2.9 million passengers in 2008 to 5 million by 2012. This is way in advance of growth supported by the Air Transport White Paper, or the Master Plan (which aims for 5.1 million b 2016), and will have huge impacts both locally and globally including:

- More traffic – only 6% of passengers get to and from the airport by public transport. The local roads cannot cope with the extra traffic.
- More noise – the flight paths to the airport cross over large swathes of residential areas.
- More carbon – at current rates of growth the airport could emit as much as the whole of Leeds by 2050.



Polar bears and members of NOLBAE protest outside Leeds City Hall about expansion of Leeds Bradford International Airport.

The No Leeds Bradford Airport Expansion coalition

(<http://www.leedstidal.org/nolbaexpansion>) has formed from groups including Friends of the Earth, Stop Climate Chaos, People and Planet and individual campaigners.

For more details about the campaign email contact@nolbaexpansion.org

FoE email action: Please email Leeds City Council to ask them to refuse the application

(http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_f_or_change/leeds_bradford_18346.html)

Southend - next phase of consultation on runway extension

Phase two of consultation on the Joint Area Action Plan (JAAP) for London Southend Airport and its environs started on 16th February. The two local authorities concerned - Rochford District Council and Southend Borough Council - ignored the consultation responses of local residents during the first phase and chose the "High Growth" option, as the preferred option, which will result in the demolition of a number of houses, the closure of a road and the runway being extended by 200m.

There are unrealistic hopes of 7,000 jobs in the next ten years, and 2 million passengers per year.

Campaigners from SAEN ("Stop Airport Extension Now") are encouraging residents to make their views known both by taking part in the consultation and writing to their councillors and MPs. They are also hosting a meeting on 18th March, which they hope will be attended by council officials and staff from the Eddie Stobart Group, which now owns the airport. The consultation period closes on 9th April, and the final version of the JAAP will be submitted to the Government during the summer.

Consultation is at: <http://rochford.jdi-consult.net/jaap>

Stobart hope a railway station linking Southend Airport with London could be operational by the end of 2009, and there have been discussions between Network Rail, National Express and the DfT about building the station. They say it would not be used for rail freight, but for getting passengers from the airport to London. And they want the runway extension and the expansion in time for the Olympics in 2012.

For more information about the campaign, visit the SAEN website at <http://www.saen.org.uk>

Manston - Furore over fast track for night flight plans

Changes to night flights were rushed through by Thanet council in the hope of securing a major freight operator. Councillors unanimously agreed to pass changes to flight times to allow planes to take off and land for an extra 30 minutes in the evening until 11.30pm and between 6am and 7am. The agreement, to come into effect in May, is on the condition that the airport signs a deal with a large cargo operator, rumoured to be British Airways. However, an announcement on the same day as the council vote said this is a Ghana based operator flying over Europe (and East Kent!) in a aircraft that was built at least 37 years ago and anything up to 42 years ago. Locals were sceptical that this is the "significant long haul European air freight carrier" that Infratil are boasting about. The airline has operated flights on behalf of a charity, Bothar, which donates animals to individual families in developing countries

A new website opposing the planned expansion of Kent International Airport at Manston has been launched, by the "Stop Manston Expansion Group" or SMEG at <http://stopmanstonexpansiongroup.blogspot.com> The aim of the site is to "bring like-minded people together to stop the unchecked expansion of Manston, and provide alternative comment on the constant positive spin from the local press and our beloved councils, TDC and KCC".

Back to the drawing board for those NATS TCN airspace change proposals

The airspace change proposal for TCN put out to consultation by NATS a year ago is being taken back to the drawing board after an overwhelming thumbs down. They got it fundamentally wrong, especially in respect of the "take it: or take it" approach which offered no alternatives for consideration. NATS say this second consultation will be "later this year; the date is still to be decided although it will not be before July." The proposal to change aircraft stacking areas, arrival and departure routes up to 2014 caused uproar across Essex, Herts, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire because of the threats posed to rural tranquillity.

They also refer, somewhat mysteriously, to "alternative design rules" for the use of Precision Area Navigation (P-RNAV) technology, which keeps aircraft on the route centre line more precisely. NATS tell us that they are "looking in detail at the precise locations of the holds in the original consultation", though we're pretty sure that means the proposed new holds for Luton and Stansted and not, as we requested, that of Heathrow's stack at Bovingdon whose location has such a bad effect on Luton westerly departures. 23.2.2009

There will probably be more campaigning and public meetings on the new proposals towards the autumn

Boris flashed about his double standards on London City airport



Anti-expansion campaigners united outside York Hall in Bethnal Green - forming a Flash Mob to greet the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, before his People's Question Time. Boris claims to have a strong environmental focus and a desire to improve the quality of life for Londoners. However his action in supporting a 50% increase in flights at London City Airport and a new airport in the Thames Estuary sends a very different message to those living in East and South East London, Essex and Kent.

The protest sent a clear message that residents in and beyond East London deserve a good quality of life and need to be treated equally rather than being ignored. They are asking Boris Johnson to change his mind and safeguard the quality of life of local residents affected by London City Airport.

During the question time, several members of Fight the Flights brought up the London City Airport question. Boris appeared angry and frustrated when he was accused of double standards over the airports: he first said that the Mayor of Newham wanted LCA to expand as it was good for the area, then that if we were not happy then vote the council out -and then that he supported it for the 1,000 jobs it would create.

Local group at City, Fight the Flights, website at: www.londoncityairportfighttheflights.com

Council objects to Doncaster Robin Hood Airport cargo flights

Armthorpe Parish Council has objected to plans to lift restrictions on night-time cargo flights at Robin Hood Airport. The airport wants to overturn a ban on noisier aircraft such as Boeing 747s flying at night, to bring it in line with other airports that accept cargo flights. The application is for a variation to the provisions of the Quiet Operations Policy of the Section 106 Agreement to permit it to operate QC4 aircraft at night, and coincides with the Master Plan consultation.

CPRE and the Green Party are also objecting to the Peel application for night-time cargo flights, and say the massive expansion that Peel has in mind will impact on people throughout South Yorkshire. Parish councils don't have the power to stop it and Doncaster council is going to put few obstacles in Peel's way, so local people need to stand up and make themselves heard before the airport takes over their lives.

Tell Doncaster Robin Hood Airport to wake up to climate change

Robin Hood Airport's draft Master Plan wants to increase their passenger numbers **tenfold** in the next 20 years. And they want people to tell them what they think of the plan. They are aiming for 10 million passengers per year by 2030. That means the airport would be responsible for emitting more CO2 than the whole of Doncaster by 2030. It will mean more traffic congestion, a need for more roads, and more noise, air pollution and local misery for residents nearby. Three quarters of air passengers at Robin Hood are UK residents going overseas. This is damaging local tourism, and removing money from the UK economy.

Friends of the Earth have set up an easy email action, by which people can send their comments on the draft Master Plan to the airport (deadline 16th March). Master Plan summary at <http://tinyurl.com/e5kf3b>

Take action: Doncaster Robin Hood airport is inviting your views - so send an email to:
http://www.foe.co.uk/campaigns/climate/press_for_change/18430.html

Deal for Carlisle Airport could be sealed soon

The Stobart Group may complete the deal to buy Carlisle Airport and begin development shortly. It currently owns an option to buy the airfield which it will exercise as soon as planning consent is officially released. Stobart are finalising a legally binding agreement demanded by Carlisle City Council that the firm will improve the runway and passenger terminal. Stobart must also come to an agreement with a Mr Gordon Brown, who farms land needed for the scheme. He says that under the terms of a lease granted to his father in 1962 he cannot be evicted until March 2011. One of Stobart's hopes is that flights would operate between Carlisle and Southend Airport, which Stobart also owns. A railway station may be built at Southend which could see trains running on a high-speed link to the Olympics site and London's Liverpool Street station.

Economic gloom continues in January traffic worldwide

IATA scheduled traffic results for January show international passenger demand fell 5.6% in January 2009 compared to Jan 2008. It fell 4.6% in December. The January load factor fell to 72.8% - 2.8% below the level in January 2008. Air cargo fell in December by -22.6% and worsened in January with a 23.2% year-on-year demand drop - the 8th consecutive month of contraction for freight traffic. Detailed figures at:

http://www.iata.org/pressroom/facts_figures/traffic_results/2009-02-26-01.htm

27.2.2009

Lydd airport

The earliest time in which determination on the airport's planning application could take place would be the middle of May due to the internal process Shepway District Council must undertake. The Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Directive must be completed first. Lydd Airport Action Group as well as the RSPB, Kent Wild Life, Natural England and the KCC believe that it is not possible to prove that the airport's development up to 500,000ppa (the capacity outlined in the planning application) will not have an adverse impact on the European wildlife sites close to the airport. LAAG's website: <http://www.kentnet.org.uk/laag>

Further snippets

<p>Over 200 jobs to go at Dublin airport</p> <p>Ryanair has announced cuts in its summer schedule at Dublin Airport, saying they will result in the loss of 200 jobs. These will be among pilots, cabin crew and engineers. SR Technics workers could find themselves out of work within the month. 13.2.2009</p>	<p>120 jobs set to go at Prestwick</p> <p>Prestwick airport are cutting a quarter of their workforce. They have told their staff that up to 120 jobs are to go - the exact number will depend on the final summer schedules and ongoing consultations. Prestwick has been hit by some firms moving business elsewhere and the demise of Seguro Holidays.</p>
<p>Call for limit on Luton night flights</p> <p>Councillors are calling on Luton Airport to restrict the number of night flights in response to complaints about noise disturbance. Total flights at Luton had increased from 7,000 in 2000 to 10,000 in 2007. There are currently 36 flights at night, more than Heathrow. 28.2.2009</p>	<p>Two flights a year ration plan</p> <p>Tourists may have flights abroad rationed under new plans being considered by Government. Gordon Brown's green adviser Lord Adair Turner said a partial ban could be the only way to cut pollution. He told MPs: "We will have to constrain demand in an absolute sense, with people not allowed to make as many journeys as they could." 6.2.2009</p>
<p>Bristol airport application soon</p> <p>Pre-planning consultation finished on 6th March. We expect plans to be put in shortly after that and will need as many people to object as possible thereafter - see www.stopbia.com for details on how to object.</p> <p>The StopBIA riposte is also available on that website.</p>	<p>"Age of Stupid" film showings</p> <p>The Age of Stupid World Premiere is on March 15th, with the UK cinema release on March 20th, 2009. It has a section on flying. For details of where you can see it, see http://www.ageofstupid.net/screenings</p>
<p>Join the iceberg at the G20 !</p> <p>"Climate Emergency" Ice-berg Demo on Weds 1st April outside the Excel Centre (Royal Victoria stop on Docklands railway from Bank) where the G20 are meeting the following day. From 12.30 pm. to 7.30 pm. (evening rally 6.30 pm) We will have a giant ice block. Bring your own (smaller) ice blocks. Organised by Campaign Against Climate Change.</p> <p>Details at: http://www.campaigncc.org</p>	<p>WeCAN rally - March 23rd - Westminster</p> <p>WeCAN Rally for Young People to ask for Climate Action Now, focussing on airport expansion and coal. 5pm to 6pm. Come to in the gardens beside the Lords on Millbank.. A key focus will be children and their future, so kids are encouraged to attend. After a short rally in the park with speakers, people, including the children, will go into Parliament to lobby MPs.</p> <p>Details at: http://www.wecan.uk.com/upcoming-actions</p>

Light relief, if not in-flight relief, from Ryanair

Is a lavatory an optional extra when you're at 30,000 feet? Ryanair boss Michael O'Leary seems to think so ...and says he might charge customers £1 to use Ryanair's aircraft toilets. This caused indignation, consternation and lavatorial humour, as well as disbelief. As always when introducing new charges, O'Leary suggested a separate toilet fee would lower ticket costs and make flying, somehow, easier for all.

Nobody was quite sure if he was serious or pursuing his well-documented penchant for making brazen declarations to win free advertising.



"One thing we have looked at in the past, and are looking at again, is the possibility of maybe putting a coin slot on the toilet door, so that people might have to actually spend a pound to 'spend a penny' in future."

When asked, during an interview on BBC Television, what would happen if a customer really had to go, but didn't have the correct change, O'Leary dismissed the scenario as implausible. One complication being that Ireland and most of Europe uses euros, not the British currency. "I don't think there's anybody in history (who has) gone on board a Ryanair aircraft with less than a pound," O'Leary said. "All this pious stuff about if you're serving teas and snacks, you can't charge for entering the toilet. All right then, we'll charge you to exit the toilets and we'll let you enter free, but you'll have to pay a pound to get back out again," he said.

Useful Info

- For a **daily digest of transport stories in the papers**, including many on aviation, see www.transportinfo.org.uk
- For more information about aviation, and news on aviation stories, see the **Aviation Environment Federation (AEF)** website at www.aef.org.uk and the **AirportWatch** website (www.airportwatch.org.uk)
- There is excellent advice on planning issues in relation to airports, on the AEF website at <http://www.aef.org.uk/?cat=8>
- For legal advice contact the **Environmental Law Foundation**. They give initial advice free. www.elflaw.org
- To find out how to buy a little piece of land at Sipson, as part of the Greenpeace Air Plot scheme, see <http://www.airplot.org.uk> - over 39,100 people have become beneficial owners so far !