

02 May 2006

Dr Paul Watson
Medical Director
Essex NHS Strategic Health Authority
Swift House
Hedgerows Business Park
Colchester Road, Chelmsford CM2 5PF

Dear Dr Watson,

The enclosed article in 24dash.com was brought to my notice a few days ago. Although this article refers to problems at Heathrow, it is, of course, relevant to children living in the vicinity of Stansted Airport.

I recollect at our meeting a short while ago you emphasised that you would do all you could to ensure that the Health Impact Assessment was carried out to a high standard and I am writing to ask you whether there is likely to be a funding shortfall in protecting schools from noise in relation to Stansted Airport. If there is to be insufficient funding, the community would need to be informed as to what measures are to be taken to protect our children from the adverse affects of noise.

Of course these adverse affects apply not only to children but to other vulnerable groups and one must also remember some of the extra auditory effects of noise which can exert adverse affects on health, particularly among the elderly.

During our discussions I mentioned the WHO Charter (1999) which stated that "we must ensure that the well being of our communities is put first when preparing and making decisions regarding transport and infrastructure policies". I seem to remember asking you whether you supported this but was surprised that you did not feel that you could concur with this viewpoint. The Charter was signed by the then Minister of State for Public Health in the United Kingdom, the Minister of the Environment for the United Kingdom, the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of the Environment, and WHO's Regional Adviser Director for Europe.

During our discussion you also stated that you could not see your way to challenge the noise contour levels laid down by the DfT despite the fact that they had been discredited by a number of influential organisations, including WHO. I personally feel strongly that,

regardless of the post we hold, those of us who are doctors must make the health of our patients or community as paramount despite other conflicting demands. From time to time, difficult as this may be, many of us have had to put our heads above the parapet. Sometimes this may not always benefit our careers but it may gain the confidence and respect of those we serve.

Some reassurance from you on the above points would be most gratefully appreciated.

With kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

Professor J.E. Banatvala

Encls.

c.c. Sir Alan Haselhurst
c.c. Mr David Barron