

## Press Release - 11 March 2008

### BAA PLANNING APPLICATION IS AN ACT OF WAR

Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) today described BAA's planning application for a second runway as going beyond environmental vandalism and being tantamount to a declaration of war on the local community and global environment. The campaign has pledged to use every means at its disposal to defeat these plans.

If BAA's plans for a second runway at Stansted were to be approved it would be the UK's biggest airport development project since the Second World War. One thousand acres of unspoilt countryside and ancient woodlands would be bulldozed, cutting a swathe through the heritage-rich villages of Molehill Green and Broxton.

In a typically presumptuous move, BAA has submitted the application before the Government has even ruled on the outcome of last year's public inquiry where the airport operator was seeking permission for maximum use of the existing runway. The application for a second runway and associated development from BAA assumes that the Government has ruled in its favour on the expansion plans for the existing runway - a move which SSE described as yet another demonstration of the degree of collusion and connivance between BAA and the Department for Transport.

BAA claims that its plans would give Stansted a capacity of 68 million passengers a year (mppa) - three times its current throughput - but this is another cynically calculated understatement because its true capacity would be at least 85mppa. However, even at 68mppa Stansted would be bigger than Heathrow today whether measured in terms of passenger throughput, number of flights or land area.

If the plans were to be approved, the relative peace and tranquillity of many historic local towns and villages such as Thaxted, Great Dunmow, Saffron Walden and Finchingfield would be lost forever and the main local town, Bishop's Stortford, could become another Hounslow within a generation. The sheer scale of what is proposed for Stansted would mean that the impacts from overflying, road and rail congestion, air pollution and urbanization would also reach far and wide across the region. People living as far as 70 miles away in Cambridgeshire and Suffolk would suffer a worsening of overflying and face the prospect of new flight paths over previously tranquil areas.

Peter Sanders warned: "The application must serve as a rallying call not just for local people who seek to safeguard this unspoilt area of countryside but for all those who care about our legacy to future generations. This is a betrayal of a longstanding undertaking to the local community that there would never be a second runway at Stansted. We will fight BAA's plans tooth and nail in what will be a defining test of whether protection of our environment is more highly valued by the Government than still more cheap flights and doing BAA's bidding."

In the past, a Royal Commission and two independent public inquiries have all ruled out a second runway on environmental grounds and when the new terminal was approved in the mid-1980s the Government 'unreservedly' accepted the recommendation of the independent inspector that there should never be a second runway at Stansted.

It has always been Stansted's unique rural location, in unspoilt countryside on the border between North West Essex and East Herts, which has convinced previous public inquiries that a second runway would be wholly unacceptable from an environmental standpoint.

Today however there is also a much wider environmental consideration. The planning application comes at a time of mounting concerns over the impact of the rapid growth in flying upon climate change. A second runway at Stansted would add the annual equivalent of 11 million tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) to the UK's carbon footprint - wiping out the combined annual saving from switching every household in the nation to low-energy light bulbs and the entire output of all the wind turbines that have so far been built in the UK.

"The Government's hypocrisy on this issue is staggering," said Mr Sanders. "They cannot claim to be taking climate change seriously and at the same time promote a doubling of air travel and the biggest expansion in airport capacity that the UK has ever seen. Nor is there any sound economic rationale: Stansted is first and foremost a leisure airport providing cheap flights abroad and was one of the main contributors to last year's record £19.4bn UK trade deficit on international travel and tourism."

**ENDS**

**NOTE TO EDITORS**

When the new Stansted terminal was approved in the mid-1980s the Government gave a commitment that there would no second runway at Stansted and 'unreservedly' accepted the recommendations of the independent inspector, Graham Eyre QC:

*'Any decision that expansion should take place at Stansted up to the capacity of a single runway must be entirely contingent upon securing the position that a second runway will not be constructed and that the safeguard and protection over most of the safeguarded area will cease.'* Inspector Graham Eyre QC, Report on the 1982-83 Stansted Inquiry, Chapter 50, para 9.7.

*'I would not be debasing the currency if I express my judgement that the development of an airport at Stansted, with a capacity in excess of 25mppa .would constitute nothing less than a catastrophe in environmental terms.'* Ibid, Chapter 25, para.12.12.

In its 2003 Air Transport White Paper the Government overturned this commitment without justification.