

Stop Stansted Expansion Press Release - 19 October 2007

STANSTED AIRPORT PUBLIC INQUIRY: "REFUSAL" IS THE ONLY LOGICAL OUTCOME

Five months of forensic examination of the arguments for and against BAA's expansion proposals for Stansted have left the Spanish-owned airport company's case in tatters Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) said today as the Public Inquiry into proposals to expand the capacity of the single runway came to a close.

BAA is now expected to announce yet another postponement to its timetable for submitting a planning application for a second runway at Stansted.

Commenting on the presentation of the BAA case, SSE Chairman Peter Sanders said that the airport operator had demonstrated a spectacular lack of rigour in its assessment of the impacts of its proposals.

"In essence," said Mr Sanders, "BAA has been wholly unconvincing in its efforts to persuade the Inquiry that its proposed development would have no material effects on the community or the environment. This should not be a surprise because, if approved, it would be the equivalent, in terms of scale of operation, to adding Birmingham Airport on top of the Stansted Airport that we have today."

"Nor," he continued, "has BAA been able to provide a shred of evidence to the Inquiry that expanding Stansted beyond its present limit of 25 million passengers a year (mppa) would deliver any net economic benefits. Indeed, the airport operator did not even deign to call a single witness to argue the economic case for its proposal."

SSE presented detailed economic evidence to the Inquiry which showed that BAA's plans were predominantly based on catering for more low-cost short haul leisure flights and would have a negative impact on the UK economy.

This is understood to be the first time that a planning application for airport expansion has been challenged on economic as well as environmental grounds. It reflects the dramatic change that has taken place over the past ten years as a result of the boom in cheap flights. In the past, increasing airport capacity enabled Britain to benefit from more inbound foreign tourism but now it has the main effect of encouraging more outbound departures.

This is also the first time that climate change has featured as a major issue at a public inquiry into airport expansion, bringing sharply into focus the Government's contradictory policies for reducing carbon emissions while at the same time supporting massive expansion of the UK's airports. To highlight these issues, SSE brought Aqaluk Lyngé, President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, from Greenland to give evidence to the Inquiry about the impacts of climate change already taking place in the Arctic.

"The Inspector has a duty to base his recommendations on the evidence presented to the Inquiry. The Government then makes the final decision," said Mr Sanders. "There is only one logical conclusion he can make in this case: that is, to recommend refusal of planning permission. The Government would be ill-advised to ignore a recommendation for refusal in view of the assurances that it has previously given to the High Court and to Parliament about the independence of the planning system to determine airport expansion plans."

Over the course of the Inquiry, lead Inspector Alan Boyland and his assistant Terry Phillimore heard evidence from more than 130 different witnesses and received hundreds of written representations. SSE presented evidence spanning 20 subjects dealt with by its own specialists and external expert witnesses, with the support of barristers Paul Stinchcombe and Sarah Hannett. A total of £130,000 was raised to pay for the professional element of this support.

Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) were present at every sitting of the Inquiry, including at sessions held in Sudbury, Ware and Little Hallingbury where Inspector Boyland made clear his concern to ensure that communities much further away from the immediate vicinity of the airport could make their views known.

Extensive representations were also made in opposition to BAA's plans by Uttlesford District Council (incorporating Essex and Herts County Councils' evidence), the National Trust, Saffron Walden Friends of the Earth, the Airlines Consultative Committee and Much Hadham Parish Council.

Third party representations included witnesses from over 50 special interest organisations and local councils, plus scores of individuals including Saffron Walden MP Sir Alan Haselhurst and member of the House of Lords, Viscount Simon. Virtually all spoke against BAA's plans, bringing forward evidence from a wide spectrum of concerns on the severe impacts the proposed expansion would have, often in the context of the effects already being experienced because of the airport's current operations.

The Inquiry, which began on 30 May, was held following an appeal by BAA against Uttlesford District Council whose Development Control Committee had unanimously turned down BAA's original planning application for unlimited passenger use of the runway and a significant increase in the number of permitted flights in a vote at the end of November 2006. The airport operator is currently limited to handling 25 million passengers a year.

The Inspector is due to submit his report on proceedings and make his recommendations to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government (Hazel Blears) and for Transport (Ruth Kelly) by Christmas. However, the contents of this report and its recommendations will not be made public until the Government has made a decision on the recommendations, probably several months into 2008. The application for a second runway at Stansted is also now expected in the New Year and this will be the subject of a further Inquiry, irrespective of the decision which is ultimately made on the single runway application.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

1. SSE's closing statement is [available here](#) and statements prepared by the other main parties are [available here](#). Copies can also be emailed on request.

2. SSE presented evidence to the Inquiry on the following issues: air and ground noise; air quality; air traffic forecasts; climate change; community cohesion; economics; employment; health; historical background; housing; landscape and quality of life; light pollution, planning context; rail; road strategic environmental issues; sustainability and water.

3. The 22 Parish Councils who gave evidence at the Inquiry, representing communities across Essex, Hertfordshire, and Suffolk, comprised: Birchanger; Chrishall; Braughing; Broxton; Gestingthorpe; Great Chesterford; Great Easton & Tilty; Great Hallingbury; Hatfield Broad Oak; Hatfield Heath; Henham; Horstead; Little Easton; Little Hadham; Little Hallingbury; Moreton, Bobbingworth & The Lavers; Pleshey; Rushden & Wallington; Stansted Mountfitchet; Takeley; Thorley; and Widdington;

4. Local authorities who (in addition to the main parties) gave evidence included Epping Forest District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council.

5. The 27 organisations and special interest groups who gave evidence were: Aviation Environment Federation; Bishop's Stortford & District Footpaths Association; Bishop's Stortford Civic Federation; Bristol Friends of the Earth; Colne Stour Countryside Association; Commonwealth Human Ecology Council; Dedham Vale Society; Dutton Hill Community Association; East of England Friends of the Earth; Essex Wildlife Trust; GMB; Heathrow Campaign Group HACAN ClearSkies; Howe Green School; Natural England; North London Strategic Alliance; Ramblers Association; Residents of Burton End; South Suffolk Air Traffic Action Group; St Giles Church (Great Hallingbury); Stour & Orwell Society; SUSTRANS; T&G Unite; Thames Gateway London Partnership; Thaxted Society; Ware Residents Against Stansted Expansion; West Anglia Commuters Rail User Group; Wormley Society.