

## Stop Stansted Expansion Press Release - 30 May 2007

### OPENING SALVOS FIRED AS STANSTED PUBLIC INQUIRY OPENS

The opening salvos were fired today (30 May) at the Public Inquiry into BAA's proposals for an extra 75,000 flights a year and the complete removal of the annual 25 million limit on the number of passengers Stansted Airport is allowed to handle.

National environmental organisations joined the local community and representatives from other airport communities around the UK in a show of unity against BAA's plans, turning out in force to hear the opening statements from the major parties to the Inquiry, including Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) which is spearheading opposition.

As well as examining the local environmental impacts of BAA's proposals, the Inquiry will be a test case of the Government's commitment to tackling the wider issue of climate change. Information finally provided by BAA last month revealed that the additional carbon dioxide emissions arising from expansion would be even higher than SSE had previously estimated and would be equivalent to wiping out the savings that would be achieved if every home in the UK changed all their conventional lightbulbs to energy efficient ones.

Paul Stinchcombe, Counsel for SSE, told the Inquiry Inspector Alan Boyland that it was imperative that this Inquiry takes fully on board the most recent statements of Government policy on sustainability in general and on climate change.

Economics will be another major battleground for the Inquiry. In the past, BAA has been able to claim that airport expansion brings major benefits to the UK economy. However, the boom in cheap overseas leisure flights has changed the economics dramatically such that expansion at Stansted would be a net drain on the UK economy, rather than a benefit.

Paul Stinchcombe made clear to the Inquiry that BAA's generalised claims of economic benefits were not backed up by any direct evidence specifically relevant to Stansted. In the absence of economic benefits, the environmental harm that would result from expansion could not be justified.

Over the course of the next five months, SSE will be presenting evidence to the Inquiry to demonstrate that BAA has systematically understated the local environmental impacts of its application in almost all the key areas such as additional aircraft noise, impacts upon local air quality, landscape and visual impacts, light pollution, road traffic and community health. Expansion to full use of the existing runway would make Stansted the UK's second biggest airport but BAA is trying to pretend that this would make no real difference to the local environment or to people's daily lives.

Since submitting its planning application in April 2006, BAA has always tried to suggest that its expansion proposal 'only' amounts to an increase from the present limit of 25 million passengers a year (25mppa) to 35mppa. SSE - like the Stansted Airlines Consultative Committee which is also fighting BAA's plans at the Inquiry - believes it could mean up to 50mppa and in March 2007 BAA finally acknowledged that 35mppa would not be the upper limit.

Summing up SSE's position, Carol Barbone, Campaign Director, said: "If Stansted were permitted to expand to maximum use of the existing runway, the local environment would suffer, the national economy would suffer and we would have taken a giant step backwards in the battle to combat climate change. The Inquiry will need to decide whether it is more important to start combating climate change or to provide more cheap flights to Prague."

**ENDS**