

Press Release - 7 May 2009

SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE VOWS TO SCRAP STANSTED RUNWAY PLANS

Visiting Essex today (7 May 2009) Shadow Secretary of State for Transport Theresa Villiers renewed her pledge to scrap plans for a second Stansted runway if the Conservatives win the next General Election.

Meeting with representatives from Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE), Theresa Villiers discussed the implications of the Competition Commission's ruling that BAA must sell Stansted, which comes in the wake of a 20 percent decline in Stansted passenger traffic over the past two years. She also heard details of the reduction in the Government's air passenger forecasts which now show that there would no demand for a second Stansted runway before 2030.

The current state of limbo resulting from the Government's decision to postpone the Public Inquiry into the second runway application was also on the agenda, together with the blight that this has created for those living locally, not least in the village of Molehill Green where the meeting was held and which would disappear if the airport expansion plans were permitted.

With a General Election due to be held no later than 3 June 2010 and the Conservatives riding high in the opinion polls, SSE strongly welcomed the Shadow Secretary of State for Transport's recognition that a second Stansted runway made neither environmental nor economic sense. However, in view of the present Government's steadfast refusal to face the facts she fully recognised the risk that there may still be an attempt to rush the application through before the next General Election.

At the end of the meeting Theresa Villiers said that she was "...more convinced than ever that a second Stansted runway was environmentally unacceptable and could not be justified on economic grounds."

After the meeting SSE Economics Adviser Brian Ross commented: "The Shadow Secretary of State was remarkably well informed about the issues at Stansted but nevertheless keen to understand every detail about the current situation." (In fact, Theresa Villiers decided to take a later train back to London so that she could continue the meeting for longer than planned and she has invited Mr Ross to a follow-up meeting in London to explore some of the wider issues in greater depth.)

Mr Ross continued: "It was helpful that earlier this week a coalition of Britain's leading businessmen came out against airport expansion, very much echoing the doubts about the economic benefits which SSE has been expressing for a long time."

SSE has no political affiliations but recognises as significant that both of the main opposition parties - the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats - are opposed to a second runway at Stansted, making BAA and the present Government increasingly isolated on this issue.

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