

STOP STANSTED EXPANSION? YES WE DID!

Stop Stansted Expansion is about to organise the biggest party in its history following BAA's humiliating climb-down over its plans for a second Stansted runway. BAA finally surrendered its position today, 24 May, formally withdrawing its planning application for a second Stansted runway which if approved would have made the airport bigger than Heathrow.

The second runway planning application had taken BAA more than four years to prepare and cost the airport operator some £200 million. However this is just a fraction of the cost to local homeowners in terms of the property blight which has plagued the local area for the past eight years, destroying the value of people's homes but worse still, destroying long established communities.

Whilst SSE is delighted that BAA has finally faced up to realities and withdrawn its planning application, this is tinged with sadness and anger over the unnecessary damage which has been inflicted upon the area and the anguish that has been caused to so many local communities.

SSE will now be pressing BAA for three immediate actions:

- * BAA must sell back all the homes and other properties it acquired in connection with its second runway plans, offering the original owners the first option to buy back;
- * BAA should issue a public apology to all the local homeowners who were served with draft compulsory purchase orders in March 2008 and who having since been living under the constant threat of the bulldozer. The apology should then be followed by proper compensation;
- * Having needlessly, recklessly and irresponsibly created eight years of blight, BAA and any future owner of Stansted should be prohibited from building a second runway at Stansted for at least 50 years.

SSE Campaign Director Carol Barbone commented: "This is a day to rejoice. It is not every day that a local community is victorious over powerful big business interests - and they don't come much bigger and more powerful than BAA. I would therefore like to pay tribute to all those who have fought so hard for so long to achieve this famous victory."

She continued: "When we set up SSE in 2002, we were told by many that '*we couldn't stop a second runway; it was a done deal - we were wasting our time*'. It turns out that it's BAA whose been wasting its time, as well as £200 million of its shareholders money. Our task now is to ensure that we never have to go through all this again. The Government will be producing a new long term policy for the UK's airports next year. SSE's final mission is to work with politicians, civil servants and others over the next 12-18 months to ensure that a second runway at Stansted forms no part of the long term plan for the development of the UK's airports."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

BAA's planning application for a second Stansted runway was submitted in March 2008. A public inquiry to consider the application was due to begin in April 2009 but has been repeatedly postponed, as a result of pressure from SSE and others, arising from the many uncertainties surrounding the application.