

Press Release - 19 February 2009

SECOND RUNWAY FACING SIX YEAR DELAY OVER WHITE PAPER EXPECTATIONS

The inability of Walter Mitty to face up to realities, make up his mind or even arrive on time is legendary. However, he is close to being upstaged by the 'mañana' culture of the Spanish-owned airport group BAA which has just announced a further two year delay in its plans for a second Stansted runway.

In a letter sent by its solicitors to Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) and others preparing for the second runway Public Inquiry, BAA has advised that the planned opening date of 2015 (assuming the grant of planning permission) has yet again been put back, this time until 2017.

The original expectation outlined in the Government's 2003 Air Transport White Paper was that a second Stansted runway should be built by 2011/12 - a timeframe which has consistently slipped ever since despite BAA repeatedly claiming that 'delivery was on track', for example:

- * "New runway project is on target for completion in 2012" (BAA press release, 24 September 2004)
- * "New Stansted Runway on track for 2013" (BAA press release, 18 May 2005)
- * "Second runway on course for 2015" (BAA press release, 11 March 2008)
- * "In view of the change to the assumed opening year from 2015 to 2017..." (BAA's legal advisers, 18 February 2009)

SSE believes that this whole second runway saga has been a farce from the start. It was a plan sold by BAA's lobbyists to Whitehall civil servants whose ivory tower world was not a million miles away from the world of Walter Mitty. A few years ago when many bankers had more money than sense, the plan might just have defied the odds and become a reality.

Today, however, the dream is over for BAA but for the local rural community around Stansted Airport the nightmare of property blight and uncertainty goes on.

SSE economics adviser, Brian Ross, commented: "It is wholly unacceptable for BAA to try to keep its options open by continuing to postpone the threat of a second runway. It should remove the threat once and for all."

Mr Ross concluded: "BAA's Director of Public Relations, Tom Kelly, is an expert on Walter Mitty and should know when the game is up. BAA should face up to realities and do the decent thing."

ENDS

NOTE TO EDITORS

The original references sources for the above bullet point quotes are available from SSE on request, together with a copy of the letter of 18 February 2009 advising of a further two year delay in expected construction of a second runway, in the unlikely event of the grant of planning permission.