

Press Release - 11 February 2010

MAKE YOUR MIND UP ON SECOND RUNWAY, GOVERNMENT TELLS BAA

The Government Minister responsible for dealing with BAA's plans for a second Stansted runway has asked the airport operator to state whether it still wants to continue with its current planning application.

John Denham, Secretary of State for Communities, has also told BAA that if it does still want its second runway application to be considered, then the information provided when it submitted the application almost two years ago will need to be updated.

The planning application documents stand more than ten feet high, which gives an indication of the amount of work that would be involved in bringing the information up to date.

The 'make your mind up' message is contained in an open letter sent yesterday (10 February) by the Secretary of State to BAA, Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) and other interested parties. The letter also states that if BAA does still want its second runway application to be considered, the Public Inquiry cannot start until after the next General Election which must be held no later than 3 June. Significantly, both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats are pledged to ditch any plans for a second Stansted runway.

SSE has been pressing the Secretary of State over the last year to bring an end to the present blight and uncertainty by having the second runway planning application withdrawn, although recognising that this is something only BAA itself can do.

SSE strongly welcomes this intervention by the Secretary of State. SSE Chairman Peter Sanders commented: "We're very pleased that the Secretary of State has now put the ball firmly in BAA's court by asking it to state its future intentions regarding its second runway application. BAA has spectacularly failed in its original intention to secure planning approval for a second runway before the next General Election, despite having had the present Government's blessing for the development since 2003. A lot of water has gone under the bridge since then, and if BAA does decide to go ahead it must make a start on updating that ten foot pile of planning documents. The blight and uncertainty has gone on for far too long."

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

A copy of the Secretary of State's letter can be [viewed here](#).

Background/chronology: BAA submitted its second runway planning application in March 2008 and initially pressed for the Public Inquiry to start within six months and to last no more than six months, i.e. to be completed by March 2009. The Government appointed a Planning Inspector in June 2008 who eventually recognised it was impractical to start the Inquiry until April 2009 and that it would take around 18 months to hear all the evidence. However, six weeks before the Public Inquiry was due to start the Secretary of State decided to postpone it because of the uncertainty about the future ownership of Stansted Airport as a result of the investigation by the Competition Commission (CC) into the BAA monopoly. This uncertainty shows no sign of ending any time soon. The CC announced yesterday (10 February) that it has sought leave to appeal to the Court of Appeal against the Competition Appeal Tribunal's judgement of December last year, which upheld one of BAA's two challenges to the CC's report on BAA airports. Further information about this is available on the [CC's website](#).

Figures published yesterday (10 February) by BAA show a 5.6% fall in Stansted's passenger numbers in January compared to the same month last year, the 27th consecutive monthly fall. The scale of the decline over this period is such that Stansted handled fewer passengers last year than in any year since 2003 and fewer flights than in any year since 2002. It is now operating at only about half of its present capacity.