

STANSTED CONTINUES TO BEAR BRUNT OF DECLINE IN AIRPORT TRAFFIC

Stansted continues to experience a sharp decline in passenger numbers, handling 11.6 percent fewer passengers in September compared to the same month last year. Heathrow and Gatwick also handled fewer passengers last month but the reduction was just 0.3 percent at Heathrow and 0.5 percent at Gatwick and so it is clearly Stansted that is bearing the brunt of the downturn.

Stop Stansted Expansion (SSE) projects that Stansted will handle fewer than 20 million passengers this year compared to the 24 million reached during the airport's 2007 heyday.

The decline in the number of flights is even more marked. SSE projects that Stansted will handle 155,000 flights this year, the lowest annual total for seven years.

The decline at Stansted is not only due to the economic recession but also to the deteriorating relationship between BAA and its main airline customer, Ryanair, which accounts for more than two out of every three of Stansted's passengers. The fact that Stansted has now posted a decline for 23 months in a row is a reminder of just how much Stansted's fortunes depend upon Ryanair.

SSE has long argued that one of the main dangers of expanding Stansted to the size of today's Heathrow was that the local economies of Uttlesford and East Hertfordshire would become over-dependent on a single source of employment. Put simply, it is the risk of having too many eggs in one basket - with Michael O'Leary holding the handle.

Commenting on the latest BAA figures, SSE Campaign Director Carol Barbone said: "BAA must know that there is absolutely no justification for continuing with its planning application for a second Stansted runway and yet it continues to maintain the line that the development is needed. There may be some tactical advantage to BAA in maintaining this ridiculous position but local residents are paying the price in terms of the ongoing blight and uncertainty, especially those with the threat of Compulsory Purchase Orders hanging over their heads."

She continued: "A far more sensible approach would be to bury the idea of a second runway once and for all and get on with the job of building a broadly based local economy which is not so dependent upon one particular source of employment."

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NOTES TO EDITORS

* BAA's latest traffic figures can be [viewed here](#).

* Following the Competition Commission's ruling on 19 March 2009 that BAA must sell Stansted (plus Gatwick and either Edinburgh or Glasgow) BAA is due to begin its appeal against this decision on 19 October 2009. The appeal, which will be heard by the Competition Appeal Tribunal, is expected to last for three days and the result is expected to be announced in December.