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Email Subject: Gatwick Second Runway Consultation Letter

Email Body:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Airports Commission Consultation

28th January, 2015

Freepost RTKX – USUC – CXAS

PO BOX 1492

WOKING

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GATWICK AIRPORT SECOND RUNWAY CONSULTATION

Dear Sir,

I would like to add my name to those objecting to the proposal to build a second runway at Gatwick Airport.

BACKGROUND

During the summer of last year substantial numbers of households – possibly in the hundreds of thousands – experienced unexpected and unwanted “noise by imposition” when Gatwick – unannounced - ran its trials of the single entry point system which concentrates all incoming aircraft along a narrow band some 500 metres wide. (The superhighway in the sky or the M25 in the sky are two adopted descriptions). We were subjected to this noise and pollution for up to 15 hours each day at 50 second intervals at peak times. We were also subjected to broken – and hitherto unheard of sleep patterns by planes arriving at random times during the so called “silent hours”. This, after much denial from both GAL and the CAA! We were lied to; our MP’s were lied to, and the press at large were lied to. Both the CAA and Gatwick have now been forced to admit that trials did take place.

Because of our local topography here in Crowborough – we sit on a high ground plateau – the affects were exaggerated because incoming aircraft do not alter altitude to follow the land profiles below them. And to make an already dire situation worse, most of the aircraft were from the Easyjet fleet, which carry the infuriatingly noisy – but easily rectifiable – A 320 engine whine. As a result of these devious trials by Gatwick, 13 new protest groups have sprung up and all are now active. To summarise this introduction, all of this intentional disruption which made for a truly unbearable summer, was carried out WITH A SINGLE RUNWAY. Were a second runway to be built, substantial extra swathes of our skies across 4 counties would have to be brought into play. And all of the noise issues would be exacerbated because the relative peace and quiet we currently experience – and have done since we moved here 19 years ago – would be subjected to high decibel levels against low levels of background noise.

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THE ECONOMY AND A SECOND RUNWAY

GAL has made sweeping statements relating to the benefits they believe would be brought to the region. Nowhere have I seen or been able to establish what these claims were based on – they were I believe supremely optimistic scenarios plucked out of the air. East Sussex – and indeed the other three counties who hypothetically could benefit – are affluent, with a very high employment level. The majority of any new jobs would be low paid and would necessitate road or rail journeys to reach them, putting extra burdens on an already overstretched road and rail system. GAL has been asked by protest groups; MP's, and the public to break these numbers down and so far I have seen nothing to suggest to me that these figures are anything but a figment of GAL's vivid imagination. Let us for a moment assume that these jobs were to come to fruition. Immediately there would be issues of extra housing on a "town the size of Crawley" scale; infrastructure; educational; welfare, and medical issues whose required dimensions should not be underestimated. In Crowborough, if I require a "same day" doctors' appointment, I need to line up outside the surgery before 8am. We are at saturation point! And a further point on jobs! When the Channel Tunnel was built, it was claimed that the thousands of jobs generated would benefit Folkestone. As I write this, Folkestone is still a depressed and dormant town. The jobs growth didn't happen!

INFRASTRUCTURE

With the very substantial extra road and rail journeys that additional businesses; passengers, and airport workers would generate, there would need to be a colossal thrust of inward investment to satisfy demand. Civil engineering projects; town bypasses; road upgrades, and motorway rethinks would need to be coordinated and costed. GAL's attempts to explain where funding would originate have been derisory. I believe Sir Howard Davies himself has said that substantial sums of taxpayer money would be needed. It simply doesn't add up! At present, it is – 9 times out of 10 – not possible to travel on the M23 or M25 – the two arterial motorways serving Gatwick – without hold ups of grave proportion. Any enlargement would require upgrading and lengthening southwards the M23. An east – west route of significance doesn't exist – it's limited to the A272 which is no more than a pretty; narrow; slow, and dangerous means to an end for those travelling to or from West Sussex or Hampshire. And the A27 further south and also running east – west, has Lancing and Worthing as its' Achilles heel and would require civil engineering input of epic proportions to transform it into anything resembling a credible link road to the M27 and beyond.

And how does Gatwick propose transporting hundreds of thousands of business people and passengers from the north. By helicopter? The only direct route at present is via the M25 - already working at capacity and subject to delays of epic proportions. That leaves travel by train. Similarly, the Gatwick Express could not start to cope with the extra numbers generated; the tube system does not serve Gatwick so in order to cope, the very minimum required would be an upgrade to the existing line – difficult

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to achieve with its' pinch point at East Croydon already developed and congested. I invite you to take two suitcases to East Croydon station and try to board the Gatwick Express. It's not a pretty sight! So, how does GAL propose to resolve these problems? It won't tell us. Neither will it tell our MP's how it intends raising funds for the many capital projects necessary. Even the mode of transport between terminals if the second runway is approved is dubious. Two separate journeys are envisaged – including a change of train – just what thousands of passengers and business people want on a daily basis! And an additional point! To cover a return for the small element of overall costs that private investment would provide, GAL's landing and departure costs would need to rise significantly. Easyjet – GAL's biggest customer – has already expressed concern that any uplift levied would compromise its' budget status model. The larger proportion of monies required would undoubtedly fall on the public purse – the taxpayer! You and I.

GAL PROPOSALS FOR NOISE CONTROL

During the trials “that didn't exist” last summer, both the CAA and Gatwick were inundated with complaints relating substantially to the whine of Airbus engines. GAL has consistently told us that they are working very closely with the relevant Authorities to reduce noise levels and that they take the issue very seriously. Really! Gatwick is paying lip service to the issue and isn't remotely interested in arresting noise levels – and neither – legally, can it. Peter Gardiner – Business Manager to the Chair and CEO of the CAA has told me in writing that neither the CAA nor GAL has any remit to control noise levels. It is the sole responsibility of the European Aviation Safety

Agency who are based – unbelievably - in Cologne! Lee Howes – Corporate Responsibility Manager at Gatwick has told me – again in writing – that there are no noise or altitude restrictions for arriving flights into Gatwick, and neither – according to Mr Howes – are there ANY restrictions on night flights. Lee Howes has also told me that GAL charges more for “noisy planes” to land and take off! Great for their balance sheet in the run up to their proposed sale in 2019! So, there is one simple question to GAL in answer to their claim that they take the noise issue very seriously. WHY - AFTER MANY YEARS OF WHINING THEIR WAY INTO GATWICK– HAVE AIRBUS ENGINES NOT BEEN MODIFIED? Effective remedial action is available but it will not (and cannot legally by either GAL or CAA) be imposed because Easyjet – the main culprit – is GAL’s biggest customer, and must not be alienated! Instruction to modify must come from Germany!

During the summer months last year GAL fronted Tom Denton - Head of Corporate Responsibility - to explain away the perceived issues. His messages from venue to venue were so contradictory that Gatwick’s PR machine degenerated into farce. I and no doubt countless others – wrote to him asking for clarification on a series of points. My correspondence was never answered! In an effort to placate different communities with mixed interests, his messages were honed and massaged accordingly. The mistake GAL made was in thinking that it was dealing with idiots! It was not!

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AIRLINE ATTITUDES

BA’s Willie Walsh has said that “their [GAL] business case has not been made.” Their operational head has also said that Gatwick operated a good niche business in the wrong place.

Easyjet don’t want a second runway.

Sir Richard Branson has said “somebody’s got to say it – expansion should be at Heathrow”.

And Vietnamese Airlines has recently moved its’ operation from GAL to Heathrow.

TOURISM

Around one million visitors come to the Weald each year for the peace and tranquillity it offers. Much of this is designated AONB, and much of it will be overflowed at low level if the second runway goes ahead. Amongst the National treasures in line to be ruined for ever (for the sake of shareholders and no doubt recipients of fat bonuses at GAL when it goes up for sale in 2019 with a portfolio of benefits built on very flimsy foundations) are The Ashdown Forest; Penshurst Place; Chiddingstone Castle; Emmets Gardens, and potentially Chartwell and the beautiful woodlands of Toys Hill. I have seen a letter from the Managing Director of Hever Castle to the effect that – due to the intolerable levels of noise last year – he has received cancellations for weddings and corporate events, and additionally has had to take action to cancel a series of summer concerts. His fear is that Hever may not survive. Is this upset to tourists – who do bring substantial financial benefits to the region, and the 3 million residents covering four counties who stand to be subjected to intolerable and relentless noise burdens, reasonable for the sake of lining the pockets of an organisation who reputedly pay no corporation tax and whose partners; accounts, and major shareholders reside offshore?

18000

This is the current fantasy figure being pedalled by Stewart Wingate at GAL relating to the number of “new” people who will be affected by noise if the second runway is built. Crowborough alone has circa 23,000 residents who, before last year – were unaffected by concentrated flight paths but will be future victims should the runway be built. Yesterday, I wrote to Dame Dierdre Hutton at CAA asking her to substantiate that figure because it cannot be anywhere near accurate. Every town (including the substantial Tunbridge Wells), village, and hamlet from Mayfield to Hever will be subjected to the single point arrivals route if implemented, and that will be without the second runway. The figure is widely thought to be wildly inaccurate and represents Gatwick’s attempt to paint a rosy picture where none exists! I believe that universally, the 13 current protest groups all believe this figure to be ridiculously low and an insult to those who suffered the dismal summer of

2014.

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AFFECT ON PROPERTY VALUES AND COUNCIL TAX

Were the second runway to be built, hundreds of thousands of properties across four counties would devalue overnight. Many of those houses are in affluent neighbourhoods and are substantial. There would be an uprising for compensation and lower valuations which would cause a landslide for Council tax rebates. I believe that every Council whose catchment or curtilage borders GAL or lies wholly or partly under skies hitherto unaffected, will be in chaos. (I have seen the genesis of a campaign for compensation and Council tax reduction if the increased noise burden of last summer is repeated. I can only imagine the mayhem if the second runway comes to fruition!!

SUMMING UP

There are currently unheard of levels of anger; frustration and discontent across our region at the manner in which the CAA; NATS, and Gatwick have been disingenuous and deceitful towards the residents and MP's of our four counties. Hence the very rapid and professionally organised formulation of 13 protest groups- all of whom will continue to work together for a common cause and who will not be "divided and ruled"; bullied, or dragged down by big business or government quangos. Nothing that the CAA; NATS, OR GAL tell us will ever be taken at face value again. As far as trust is concerned, they have all shot themselves in their proverbial feet!

Gatwick can never hope to be a hub airport; it is in the wrong place; the infrastructure needs are not achievable without massive and lengthy inconvenience to local communities; It cannot tell us or our MP's where the colossal funding requirement will come from; it cannot start to cater for the hundreds of thousands of extra business people and passengers from the north (or south) that a second runway would generate; there would be very substantial extra requirements for housing; educational needs; welfare and NHS needs, and the funding to bring those to fruition, and lastly, all MP's whose constituencies skirt Gatwick; 3 out of 4 County Councils (the fourth with a very important and significant caveat); local councils – including Crawley ,Gatwick's home - and the overwhelming majority of residents who suffered intolerable; consistent and unnecessary noise and pollution across this region last summer, don't want it. If our Prime Minister wishes to promote his much heralded "localism" initiative, in East Sussex; West Sussex; Kent, and Surrey, we're speaking loud and clear!

I submit this for your consideration.

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