

Sir Howard Davies  
Airports Commission  
Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London SW1P 3BT

16 November 2014

Dear Sir Howard Davies

Some initial background information on recent experience on which my comments are based:

I have owned a property in Lightwater since 1987 during which time, aircraft noise, although present occasionally has never been an issue.

That situation changed suddenly and dramatically when Heathrow began Flight trials in December 2013, without warning or consultation. Life has been intolerable since. No longer can windows be open at night due to early morning and late night flights, nor gardens enjoyed. Flights pass overhead lower, louder, earlier and later than ever before. This has impacted on the ability to gain sufficient sleep, which has had a direct affect on my work, general health and well being.

More than 10,000 people signed petitions in my local area, demanding the cessation of the trials. Under intense pressure from local communities, Heathrow committed to end the trials scheduled to end January 2015, ahead of plan on November 12. Sadly a commitment they have not honoured. Residents are once again complaining of disruption caused by noise – it is as if the trials continue. We are now demanding no further increase in aircraft noise than we experienced before the start of trials in December 2013.

Whilst Heathrow denies these trials have any bearing on their widely publicised ambition to expand Heathrow, local communities, now cynical and suspicious of Heathrow motives, remain unconvinced.

Now I am armed with first-hand experience of the implications of increased air traffic and noise, I should like to submit the following comments for your consideration:

- **Environment & Pollution – we need to reduce, not increase emissions.**

In a world supposedly concerned about the environment and climate change, why should air traffic be exempt and simply allowed to continue to grow despite the known environmental implications?

Heathrow already has a poor record. Air pollution is reportedly so bad that some places around Heathrow already break safe air pollution limits laid down by the European Union. Add to that the increase in vehicles travelling to the airport in already congested conditions.

Former Heathrow boss Colin Matthews has suggested it would seem that a section of the M4 would need to be 'diesel-free' in order for the airport to meet pollution targets. Surely we should insist that Heathrow can meet its target legitimately by means of quieter, less polluting aircraft rather than rely on environmental manipulations in order that it can expand its operations?

Your consultation report confirms the potential for the increased risk of flooding downstream from the airport. Ironic as aviation emissions must certainly be a factor in climate and weather change.

National and Global Leaders and people in positions of influence, must take robust action on polluters, only then will demand for air travel fall.

- **Social and Economic – cost to the individual and the Treasury**

If, as some would have us believe, we face economic ruin unless we expand airport capacity, why has our Economy grown faster than any other European country without this so called critical airport expansion? It is perhaps only those who will benefit commercially and monetarily who are convinced.

At a community level, sleep deprivation for those subjected to flight paths not present before, potentially resulting in:

- Economic cost of loss of productivity at work and in the classroom
- Economic cost of stress affecting health and well-being with longer term implications for NHS resources and budgets

Should we not instead be reviewing the tax-breaks given to the Aviation industry which create an artificially high demand for air travel? If the industry was also required to pay in full the costs of the environmental damage it causes, then this combination should lead to a natural reduction in demand. Proper duties and taxes would reflect the true cost of aviation both economically and environmentally. The additional revenue raised could perhaps afford tax breaks and people could make an informed choice about whether or not to spend on air travel.

I, for one, find it offensive that money is being squandered to subsidise an industry that pays scant regard to my quality of life in its rush for the pursuit of profit.

As I understand it, a combination of improvements to high speed rail to replace domestic flights, orbital connections between airports could go some way to improving existing capacity. We should therefore be encouraging investment in, and the use of, less polluting forms of travel.

- **Unsustainable Location – we cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear.**

Heathrow, which as we all know began life as a private airfield, is already poorly located and unsuitable for continued incremental development. Its flight paths send aircraft over heavily-populated parts of London which has implications for safety, air and noise pollution. Over one million people are estimated to be adversely affected by plans to expand Heathrow.

History tells us that demand from Heathrow will never be satisfied. Your consultation document states that land take has already increased since the initial May submission.

**Community & Housing:** Although Heathrow cannot possibly continue to expand due to its poor location, it seems we are prepared to completely eradicate entire communities who have a far greater history.

Those displaced, as well as new workers and their families required to support an expanded Heathrow must be housed. Where is space for such a number of homes coming from in an already overstressed environment? Alternatively, those working at Heathrow will be forced to move ever further and commutes will be longer and increase congestion on transport links also already stressed.

If continued unchecked, will we simply bulldoze ever increasing amounts of residential areas and communities to accommodate that ambition for expansion?

Alternatively, we now have the opportunity to stop and consider a truly longer term strategy rather than simply capitulate to budget led and time based quick fix solutions. Such investment would surely reap rewards economically for the whole country and improve the quality of life for thousands of people for decades to come.

This is a golden opportunity to bring aviation into the 21<sup>st</sup> century and address the myopic piecemeal approach of recent decades. I am not necessarily advocating 'Boris Island' (fantastic an idea as it is) when I say we need only look to Hong Kong for inspiration of what can be achieved. It represents not only an inspiring feat of engineering, but an example of real change and the kind of fresh thinking required to meet the future needs of an aviation industry which now represents a blight rather than a benefit for many.

If, however, we again approach things in the same old manner with interim fixes that may last a decade or two at best, then we simply postpone truly resolving the issue and simply pass the buck to a future generation.

If London and communities of the South East are not to be under ever increasing siege from the air, it will require visionaries to have the foresight and courage to make recommendations and decisions which will truly herald a new era of sustainable aviation.

I hope Commission members include such visionaries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rosalie James". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rosalie James

cc:

The Rt. Hon. David Cameron, Prime Minister

The Rt. Hon. Michael Gove, MP