



Department
for Transport

Philip Rutnam
Permanent Secretary
Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

Philip M Rutnam,

Re: Awarding contract for consults to review of papers supplied by TDC and RiverOak in relation to Manston Airport

Thank you for your letter of 18 March. This is to confirm that I am directing you as Accounting Officer to proceed with approving the award of a contract to consultants to undertake a review of papers supplied by Thanet District Council (TDC) and RiverOak Investment Corporation LLC (RiverOak) in relation to TDC's proposal not to progress with a Compulsory Purchase Order of the former Manston Airport site.

I have noted your concerns about the value for money of undertaking such a review. However, I believe there are wider issues to consider which I accept fall outside the remit of the Accounting Officer but that I consider are relevant.

Our own Aviation Policy Framework highlights the importance of airports in encouraging investment, exports and in creating local jobs. Smaller airports in particular can often be key to providing regions with convenient access to other national and international markets. Evidence that the Department has provided to the Transport Select Committee's recent inquiry on the role of small airports supports this view. Manston Airport itself provided 150 jobs to the local community when it was open and provided connections for the region to Schiphol Airport. Manston was also the UK's sixth largest freight airport in 2013 handling over 29,000 tonnes of cargo.

It is understandable therefore that there have been strong local feelings generated by the closure of the airport and if a decision is taken to use the site for other purposes it will not be possible to re-open the airport in future. I realise that this is a decision ultimately for TDC to make. However TDC have indicated that they would like to see the site retained for aviation use. I therefore believe we should be willing to use the resources at our disposal to support and assist the Council. Both TDC and RiverOak are content for us to procure the study.

From the Secretary of State
The Rt. Hon. Patrick McLoughlin

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In light of these factors I believe that there are good grounds for awarding a contract to consultants to undertake the review as proposed.

I note that you will forward our exchange of letters to the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Treasury Officer of Accounts.

y- sincerely

Patrick McLaughlin

THE RT. HON. PATRICK McLOUGHLIN