



Campaign Response Text:

I am opposed to additional runways in the UK because more runs mean:

- More CO2 emissions
- More noise
- More traffic
- More air pollution
- Loss of tranquillity in rural areas including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Historic buildings demolished
- The building of more new houses in already overcrowded areas with insufficient infrastructure and putting strain on water resources

Q1. What conclusions do you draw in respect of the three short-listed options?

In terms of the three short listed options I am not in favour of expansion at Heathrow or Gatwick. Expansion at either would have catastrophic impacts on the local communities of both areas, the environment (in terms of air quality, noise, congestion on all forms of transport, loss of biodiversity, impacts on water quality and supply and increased risk of flooding, landscape impacts), demand for housing (which is already a problem in Surrey for example) and impact on cultural heritage (losses of historic buildings in Surrey for example). Therefore I am not supporting any of these three options and am calling on the government to think again about if (given the impact expansion of aviation would have on the UK's carbon targets – your ref S1 para 1.8). My response focuses on the question of expansion of Gatwick, which is my “local” airport.

Q2. Any suggestions how the short-listed options could be improved?

I do not agree with the principle of airport expansion at Gatwick or Heathrow, so other than looking at how to reduce the need to travel, and to meet the need that remains in other ways than air travel, there is no scope for improvement within the terms of this consultation document. By continually putting environmentally unsustainable demands on the the UK's environment we undermine the quality of life of everyone living here and sign up to irreversible long term damage

(in terms of increased carbon emissions, loss of biodiversity etc) which has wider impacts on society.

Q3. Comments on how the Commission has carried out its appraisal?

The Commission appears to have carried out a thorough appraisal of these options, although its terms of reference place heavy emphasis on securing “the UK’s connectivity and hub status” which limit the potential for finding creative solutions to our present challenges. If the brief had been “to meet the UK’s future transport needs whilst securing an improved environment and quality of life for us all” the outcome might have been very different. Given the limited range of options on offer, all of which have catastrophic impacts and do not deliver any benefits at all to the rest of the UK which might benefit from an injection of economic Viagra of this kind, the only option for me is to opt for “none of the above”.

I have been outraged however by the bribery and misrepresentations brought directly into our homes by Gatwick Airports Limited. Offering to pay people £1000 to win their support cannot possibly compensate future generations for their loss of quality of life, green space, clean air, biodiversity. It is a short term cynical ploy to silence people who desperately need an injection of cash, alongside £46 million on offer to local authorities to buy their support. I understand too that GAL has encouraged parish councils around Heathrow to write in support of the Gatwick proposal. All this will inevitably distort public opinion and it is vital that the Airports Commission discounts this attempt by the developer to curry favour and influence the responses to the consultation. It will be impossible to know to what extent that has discouraged opposition locally, and encouraged support further afield, but it should be recognised as a factor in the final report. On the issue of apprenticeships also being offered, it is unclear why GAL cannot offer them now without the need for airport expansion (letter from Stewart Wingate , GAL CEO, to local residents, undated).

Q4. Any relevant factors that have not been fully addressed?

As long as this extra capacity is available it is a travesty to add the extra environmental and other burdens to Heathrow and Gatwick’s communities. Given the scale of the problems this really is a time to think outside the box and to take the airlines with you.

Q5. Comments on specific topics?

The problem about the approach is the lack of application of the principles of sustainable development in an holistic manner. The Government is signed up to mainstreaming sustainable development across all its activities, policies and departments. This means “driving improvements across the economy, environment and society for current and future generations”(Government Progress in Mainstreaming Sustainable Development – DEFRA 2013). The airport expansion process places emphasis on “maximising economic benefits and supporting the competitiveness of the UK economy”. The positive outcomes it sees for local communities are in terms of economic

outcomes. However when it comes to environmental harm the unambitious goal is to “minimise” carbon emissions, noise and flood risk. This accepts the inevitability of these negative factors increasing. If the goal had been to “improve the quality of life for people living around Gatwick and Heathrow airports and to improve the local and wider environment whilst enhancing economic outcomes, for the present and future generations” it is most unlikely that these airport expansions would have been top of the list. The Coalition Government has recognised this: “Taking account of the potential impact of policies is essential to avoid the risk of long-term damage to the natural resources vital for continued economic prosperity and future well-being. It is not just about avoiding adverse consequences but also finding opportunities and supporting positive impacts” (DEFRA 2013). But its strategic vision does not seem to match up with its actions on the ground in terms of promoting airport expansion.

Local economy impacts

The Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) has published a helpful report about the likely impacts of airport expansion on local businesses (Bad for Business www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news <<http://www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news>>)

I disagree with the assessment that the scheme would have “only very limited additional pressures on housing and other local services” as demonstrated by our other comments. There could be a serious detrimental effect on the local economy if needs for additional workers cannot be met locally and have to be imported, either by placing unsustainable pressure on housing and local services or on transport services if people commute in. The hope that people currently commuting out of the area might find jobs at Gatwick instead, is unsupported by firm evidence that this would be likely to happen (Your ref 8.12).

Surface access.

I am concerned about increased road traffic in the area due to 96 million p.a. air passengers, likely vastly increased number of airport staff, plus new firms attracted to the area. Road travel is already predicted to increase substantially and this would add to that burden, which already causes serious problems in local communities (including in Dorking as an overloaded or closed M25 pushes traffic through Dorking on the A24 and A25 causing traffic gridlock now on a regular basis). The proposals in the Airport Commission’s document would not deal with this as there are already major issues without expansion, particularly when accidents or roadworks block the M25. The impacts of increased road traffic are seriously underestimated in the assessment. Any demands for new by-passes or tunnels at Crawley, Reigate and Dorking would add to the knock on impacts of the airport, pushing its footprint further into rural areas, the Green Belt and the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

I also believe that the Commission’s assessment seriously underestimates the impacts of the

increase in rail use and the mitigation that would be needed. I can already predict that increases would not just be down to people employed directly at the airport and the increased number of passengers, but also the general growth in travel related to economic growth caused by expansion. The assessment of impact and mitigation is based on predictions for 2030, when numbers would be half the final prediction. And it is not good enough to say that London Bridge station would be seriously affected by overcrowding but that would be “largely driven by background demand growth”. Any addition to an already overcrowded situation applies extra pressure to people whose jobs and homes are nothing to do with Gatwick and who only lose out as a result.

Noise

The Commission has identified a potential doubling to tripling in noise nuisance from the airport in the Crawley area. I am concerned about the impact of this on local residents, schools, places of worship and peaceful green spaces. I already know from recent experience in Mole Valley that changes in the flight path or increases in incidence of fly pasts or earlier or later noise, all cause a huge impact in a relatively rural area. The level of distress and upset at recent meetings at Beare Green and Reigate caused by flight path changes were unmatched by any other local protest meetings held in 2014. This has been well documented and is direct evidence that this is not just a question of numbers comparison between Heathrow and Gatwick but the background context against which any changes take place. Airport expansion at Gatwick would double the number of flights and also impact on an ever increasing number of people, as inward migration linked to expansion increases.

Also, Gatwick is surrounded on three sides by the High Weald and Surrey Hills Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, which people visit for their tranquillity. Public bodies have a duty to have regard to the purpose of AONBs to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area. This would include the peace and quiet and the impact on the AONBs of increases in aircraft noise should be fully assessed.

Air quality

According to Public Health England, Surrey already has the highest number of deaths caused by air pollution in the South East. The most recent figures show that 5.7% of deaths in Surrey were caused by air pollution. A second runway would only increase the problems already being experienced by those living in Surrey and West Sussex.

Biodiversity

I am concerned at the loss of 70 ha. of woodland including 14 ha. of ancient woodland. This is not a replaceable environmental asset and is in scant supply in the local area. The concept of “offsetting” assets like ancient woodland has now been thoroughly discredited and would not help

mitigate the impacts of this proposal. The Government has said it will only sacrifice ancient woodland in “exceptional circumstances”, which are avoidable in this case.

I am also concerned at the significant (421 hectare) loss of agricultural land, given the projected increases in population and the ever increasing demand for food. I support the concept of locally produced food which minimises carbon emissions and builds resilience against climate change into the food supply system.

GACC has set out the reasons why it believes the demand for land is under-estimated in the Airport Commissions’ assessments. I do not accept the approach in the Commission’s consultation of comparing the cost of the loss of ecosystem services (“these impacts are small”) against the economic benefit of expansion (we cannot eat money). Land to grow food on is in increasingly short supply in the South East. The value of an ancient woodland is without comparison in financial terms.

I agree with the Commission’s assessment of biodiversity impacts as adverse although in some respects it is highly adverse.

Carbon

Water and flood risk

I am concerned about two impacts under this heading: increased run off from a greater area of tarmac and buildings and the impacts on the river Mole. Last winter (2013/14) there was a very serious incidence of flooding at the Burford Bridge near Dorking which led to the closure of a major hotel and subsequent loss of business. This was largely blamed on the need to protect Gatwick Airport from flooding and literally opening the flood gates into the River Mole, thus passing on the impacts. Under all climate change scenarios flooding is likely to increase in frequency and severity and local communities would be most concerned if this risk was heightened because of expansion at Gatwick. The Commission is unclear about the flood risk indicating that it is unpredictable, which is unacceptable given past history and the future predictions.

Place

The Airports Commission is predicting the loss of 702 hectares of green countryside for the immediate requirements of building the expansion to Gatwick, including 60 hectares in the Green Belt. However GACC is predicting the additional loss of countryside for 40,000 new houses (due to inward migration of the workforce), and potentially the 286 displaced commercial premises. There have already been protests in Mole Valley and elsewhere in Surrey about the proposed loss of Green Belt land for housing, which led to an about turn from the Government in its requirement for local authorities to meet housing targets in the Green Belt. Additional pressure of this nature would be unsustainable in terms of impacts on the environment and pressure on local services.

Inward migration would add considerably to the estimates of increases in waste etc. The footprint of expanding at Gatwick may be difficult to measure, but it should be recognised more fully in the assessments.

The proposals would also lead to substantial losses to our local cultural heritage (the loss of 19 listed buildings, five of which are in the top 6% most important buildings in Britain). I share the concerns of GACC which says these losses would be the largest in terms of cultural heritage since the Blitz in the Second World War. Moving them, as suggested by GAL, would not mitigate the impact even if it were possible.

Quality of life

I do not agree with the methodology that is used to arrive at a “broadly neutral overall impact” (your 2.71) on our quality of life. A negative impact of noise cannot be offset by a positive impact on jobs or being able to fly more easily, as these are essentially chalk and cheese quality of life measures. My quality of life might be better if I get a great job at Gatwick, but my neighbour might be suffering tremendously from being woken at 5.30am by aircraft noise and suffer ill health as a result. Trying to generalise and balance off quality of life measures like this is unhelpful.

We can be sure that quality of life in terms of increased noise, traffic jams, rail over-crowding, loss of our countryside and historic buildings and their setting, worries about air quality and flooding and the contribution increases in air travel make to carbon emissions are all negative. That leaves aside the potentially negative effects of increased pressure on housing, schools, doctors, hospitals, social services by additional people moving into an already crowded area. The economic gain of a job or more profits to airline companies cannot be weighed in the same scales. So, while we commend the Airports Commission, for being the first to undertake a quality of life assessment for a major infrastructure project like this and trying to identify quality of life measures is constructive, the methodology is questionable and we do not accept the conclusions.

Community

I do not accept that airport expansion would have a neutral impact on the local and wider community.

The proposals and discussion at various public fora have highlighted a set of concerns which have direct impacts on the cohesion and well being of local communities eg: added noise; more traffic; loss of precious built heritage and countryside. The community is already under stress from these

proposals and their future and long lasting impact is not hard to predict. The only people who support the idea of airport expansion are those who already work there, but that is a minority of people with a vested economic interest, whose support is understandable.

The assessment disregards the likely stress that would result from in-migration of more Gatwick workers from elsewhere in the UK or from the EU. Mole Valley is already under pressure from housing shortages, traffic increases with the resulting impact on air quality, pressure on public services (particularly hospitals and schools) and public transport deficiencies. It may be hard to predict these effects but these should be acknowledged.

Q6. Comments on the sustainability assessments?

Economic growth and increased employment are benefits only if they are achieved sustainably. These benefits are reduced, or not achieved, if derived through means that create pollution and reduce quality of life, and result in poorer mental and physical health outcomes with all the additional costs those problems generate.

Q7. Comments on the business cases?

The Green MEP for the South East, Keith Taylor, has been part of a coalition in Europe arguing for the introduction of a tax on aviation, which would provide for a level playing field with other modes of transport. If this campaign is successful (and it enjoys a great deal of support across Europe) the business case for expansion would collapse which would help motivate consideration of other ways of meeting the future challenges of economic growth and getting people from A to B sustainably. This consideration is not factored in to the business case.

Q8. Any other comments

I recognise there are physical limits to growth on the planet and support a sustainable society that guarantees our long term future. The success of a society cannot be measured by narrow economic indicators (which is the central focus of this exercise), but should take account of factors affecting the quality of life for all people: personal freedom, social equity, health, happiness and human fulfilment. The Airport Commission has done a thorough job in rooting out the impacts and benefits of the proposals, but it does so on a flawed brief and in some cases has reached conclusions based on flawed approaches or methodology (particularly by missing out the knock on effects of airport expansion with an ever growing footprint of detrimental effects). The pressurised South East of England is no place for new runways or flight paths. The proposals are unsustainable at Heathrow or Gatwick and will hinder efforts to meet the UK's carbon reduction targets. They would lead to catastrophic environmental damage at either location and enormous impacts on their local communities. The Government needs to act consistently with its own policies on the environment and sustainable development and go back to the drawing board with these plans.