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Dear Supporter,

An Eventful Summer

Planning Application

The most unwelcome development since our last newsletter in July is that we've reached the end of the road in our attempts to prevent Stansted Airport obtaining permission to expand to a capacity of 43 million passengers per annum (mppa). This battle began in June 2017 and ended more than four years later on 6 October 2021 when Uttlesford District Council ('UDC') decided not to proceed any further with its intended High Court appeal against the planning approval granted by the Inspectors following the Public Inquiry earlier this year. We had intended to support UDC in the High Court. However, that option no longer exists and there is no further avenue for appeal.

Having regard to all the circumstances, UDC had little choice but to call a halt to its legal challenge. A senior High Court Judge, after reviewing UDC's case, refused permission for a full court hearing on the grounds that UDC did not have a sufficient legal basis for a challenge. This was in line with UDC's own legal advice. The real damage was done earlier this year at the Public Inquiry when UDC – inexplicably – did not attempt to defend its own Planning Committee's unanimous refusal of the airport application. There now needs to be an independent investigation into UDC's handling of the Public Inquiry but everything else is water under the bridge and so we need to move on.

The outlook for the aviation industry has changed a great deal since the 43mppa application began its journey four years ago. Stansted handled just 7.5 million passengers in 2020 and it will have a similar passenger throughput this year. It will take some time for Stansted to return to its pre-pandemic throughput of 28mppa, longer still to reach 35mppa (for which permission was granted in 2008) and, as matters currently stand, 43mppa looks a very distant prospect.

In addition to the challenge of recovering from the impact of the pandemic, Stansted is likely to face more intensive competition in future. Encouraged by the approval of the Stansted planning application, competitor airports are now poised to submit their own expansion plans. Gatwick is likely to be first in the queue with a proposal to lift its capacity by about 50% to 71mppa and Luton may not be far behind with a proposal to increase its potential throughput from 18mppa to 32mppa. On top of all this the Government continues to attach priority to a third runway at Heathrow, which would lift its capacity from about 85mppa to 135mppa.

We find it almost impossible to reconcile Government support for unfettered airport expansion with the imperative of combatting climate change, which is said to be a key Government priority. For the time being the Government is pinning all its hopes on technologies yet to be invented or developed to achieve 'net zero' aviation carbon emissions by 2050. But hope is not a strategy, and we believe that in due course the Government will come to accept the advice of the independent Climate Change Committee that the demand for air travel needs to be dampened down. The UK needs to show leadership as hosts of the COP26 summit which begins in Glasgow next week.

Stansted also faces the challenge of replacing the business lost as a result of the decision made by EasyJet, its second biggest airline, to close its Stansted base. Whilst Stansted will continue to receive some EasyJet flights, this will only be about a third of the pre-pandemic level.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Stansted faces some strong headwinds over the coming years which will restrict its growth prospects. Nevertheless, there will be no shortage of work for us to do in seeking to minimise the day-to-day (and night-to-night) adverse impacts of Stansted's operations on the local community.

Night Noise

The Department for Transport ('DfT') recently carried out a preliminary consultation on Night Flights and although new arrangements are not expected to be introduced until 2025, SAW took the opportunity to highlight the adverse impacts of night flights on the health and wellbeing of the local community. SAW also questioned why Stansted is allowed 13,700 night flights per annum, more than twice as many as Heathrow. We advised the DfT that our three main priorities were:

1. An unequivocal commitment to phase out all night flights at Stansted, starting next year, and with a complete ban in place by 2030, except in the case of genuine emergencies;
2. The restrictions on night flights to apply, not just from 11.30pm to 6.00am, but from 11.00pm to 7.00am, so that 'night' truly means 'night', as defined by the WHO; and
3. An immediate ban on all night time aircraft landings at Stansted using reverse thrust, except in the case of genuine emergencies.

By contrast, Manchester Airports Group ('MAG') replying to the same consultation, proposed that the limit on the number of permitted night flights at Stansted should be completely removed. MAG also told the DfT that it opposed the proposed night time bans of the noisiest aircraft types. Clearly, we have another battle on our hands over the next three years prior to the introduction of the new arrangements. It is particularly galling that MAG appears to have totally disregarded the terms of a planning agreement which Stansted Airport signed with UDC in May 2003, as follows:

"From the date of this agreement not to seek any relaxation of the night flight restrictions currently in force for the night period of 23.00 – 06.59 or for the night quota period of 23.30 – 05.59"

This is a salutary reminder that MAG will always aim to attach higher priority to the interests of its shareholders than to the interests of the local community. That is why we need a strong voice.

Airspace Modernisation

Stansted Airport is currently arranging 'Stakeholder Engagement Sessions' to explain plans for revising local flight paths as part of a national airspace modernisation programme. The CAA is coordinating a rolling five to eight year national programme after local plans have been developed and publicly consulted upon. Stansted is at the stage of translating design principles into developing flight path options and this is the purpose of these engagement sessions. If you are invited to attend one of these sessions, please make every effort to do so. SAW's Noise Adviser Martin Peachey is closely involved at both local level with Stansted Airport and nationally with the CAA. For further information and advice, you can email Martin at mfpeachey1@gmail.com.

Financial Position

I am pleased to advise that as a result of the generous level of donations from members our financial position has improved and we are now gradually beginning to rebuild our reserves.

Community Calendar

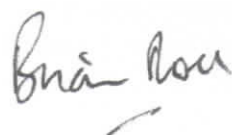
The 2022 edition of our Community Calendar, the twentieth to be produced, is now on sale priced at just £8.00, the same as last year. The Calendar makes an important contribution to our campaign funds and, as always, features superb local photographs, all taken by volunteers. The enclosed leaflet provides more information. See also the "Take Action" page on our website.

And Finally

An administration request from our Campaign Office – although we are now SAW, please continue to make out cheques to SSE. Thank you.

With many thanks for your ongoing support.

Yours sincerely



Brian Ross, Chairman