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10 August 2009

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

By post and email

Dear Secretary of State

**Stansted Airport Noise Action Plan 2010-2015
Draft for Consultation June 2009**

The aim of the European Union Environmental Noise Directive 2002/49/EC (END) as stated at the outset (Article 1: Objectives) is to define a common approach. It is therefore a major concern to find that the Stansted Airport draft Noise Action Plan ('NAP') falls at the first fence by failing to provide a common approach for the numbers of people and dwellings affected by aircraft noise.

BAA's draft NAP for Stansted Airport states that it provides the results of the 2006 noise mapping and this is one of the primary information sources for its proposals. In fact, the estimated numbers of affected people and dwellings given in the Stansted draft NAP are not the results of the 2006 noise mapping at all and we are concerned at the misrepresentation of the real picture by BAA in its consultation.

The noise mapping, together with figures for affected people and dwellings, was carried out by the Civil Aviation Authority ('CAA') and published in December 2007. The figures for affected people and dwellings given in BAA's draft NAP were apparently provided by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs ('Defra') and differ from the CAA results in the following key areas:

- The CAA figures were all published in 5 decibel contour bands for the five different noise indices in compliance with the END.
- Defra provided its figures as cumulative totals in steps of 3 decibels for four out of the five different noise indices. This is a totally different method.
- The significance of this is that it is impossible to reconcile four out of the five sets of Defra figures given in BAA's draft NAP with the CAA figures that should have been used.
- In the only case where it is possible to reconcile these two different sets of figures, the Defra figures understate the affected population and dwellings by 600 (6%) and 350 (8%) respectively. It is impossible to know what the discrepancies are for the other four sets of noise indices.
- Where BAA's draft NAP states that the number of people and dwellings affected are 9,400 and 3,850 respectively, the corresponding CAA figures are 10,000 and 4,200.

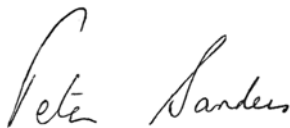
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The misrepresentation and understatement of noise data in the Stansted draft NAP is unacceptable and is another example of what can only be described as a casual approach towards implementation of the END by Defra and BAA alike, noting that:

- Defra has already undermined the potential benefits of the END to people living in the vicinity of airports by deciding that the Competent Authority for drawing up noise action plans is to be the airport operators themselves.
- Defra did not even publish guidance for airport noise action plans setting out limit values or other criteria for the identification of priorities until March 2009, some 20 months later than the deadline of 18 July 2007 contained in Regulation 14(1) of the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006.
- Defra is now seeking to amend the Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 by removing responsibilities placed upon the Secretary of State by Parliament and replacing them with discretionary powers, again undermining the aim of the original EU Directive.

We seek your assurance that you are fully committed to effective implementation of the END and to its objectives as set down in Article 1. More particularly and urgently, we ask you to ensure that the common approach specified by the END is implemented in respect of the Stansted draft NAP, and that you will insist on corrected figures being published so that the public consultation can take place on the basis of accurate and consistent data.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peter Sanders".

Peter Sanders
Chairman

cc Rt Hon Lord Adonis, Secretary of State for Transport
Ms Yvette Bosworth, Head of Noise and Nuisance, Defra
Rt Hon Sir Alan Haselhurst MP
Mark Prisk MP