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2 May 2008

Mr Paul Barron CBE
Chief Executive
NATS Corporate and Technical Centre
4000 Parkway
Whiteley, Fareham
Hants PO15 7FL

Dear Mr Barron

Consultation for Terminal Control North (TCN) Airspace Change Proposals

We refer to our letter to NATS of 18 April 2008 (copy attached for ease of reference) where we asked for urgent answers to the questions put to your representative, Mr Lee Boulton, at the Stansted Airport Consultative Committee ('STACC') on 9 April 2008. Our parent organisation, the North West Essex and East Herts Preservation Association ('NWEHPA'), which is represented on STACC, wrote to you in similar terms on 11 April with a copy to Mr Boulton.

It is disappointing to note that none of our questions has yet been answered and in fact we have not even had an acknowledgement to either letter.

The TCN consultation is due to close less than three weeks from now. It is an enormously important consultation which will affect the quality of life for millions of people. NATS itself describes this as "The Biggest Ever Consultation On Airspace Change". We agree with that and yet NATS' approach towards this consultation from the outset has been extremely unhelpful towards members of the public and their representatives who wish to understand what is being proposed. For example:

- On the day of publication access to your consultation website was virtually impossible – when many people would have been trying to learn more about the proposals, stimulated by the media coverage which followed your briefings the previous day. Problems in accessing your consultation website have continued since, albeit on an intermittent basis;
- Your unwillingness to provide printed copies of the consultation documents – instead directing people to your website where the documents listed amount to more than 150MB due to the extensive use of colour maps. Printed copies of the documents have not been made available even to parish and town councils who wish to respond on behalf of the communities they represent. NATS' advice to 'visit the library to consult copies' is really not good enough when so many people are so profoundly affected;
- Just for the local area around Stansted ('Part G: East Hertfordshire and West Essex area') it is necessary to download a 17.7MB file which is impractical for those without access to a high speed broadband connection and additional large files need to be downloaded to understand the context. Where required for onward distribution to others – for example, to members of a parish council – the task of downloading and copying (including the need for colour printing facilities) is simply impracticable in many cases with the result that few people have an adequate understanding of exactly what is being proposed;
- This is compounded by gaps (e.g. alternatives considered) and errors (e.g. labelling Figure G50 as Luton when it refers to Stansted) in the TCN consultation;

Patron: Terry Waite CBE

Stop Stansted Expansion is a working group of the North West Essex and East Herts Preservation Association

- Problems with the 'Postcode Finder' facility on your consultation website. Maps showing precise locations consistently revert to a default Heathrow-centric picture and when the relevant maps *are* found on the Postcode Finder, these cannot be printed. This is wholly unhelpful for those wishing to obtain a side-by-side comparison between the proposals and the current position, either for their own benefit or to discuss with others;
- Problems with the on-line response form, for example, respondents are not allowed to be neutral on the question asking whether arrivals should fly by "direct flight path" or by "specified routes". Unless a respondent chooses one of these, he or she is returned to a page which advises there has been a 'login problem'. The respondent then needs to start filling in the on-line response form all over again;
- Parish and town councils have told us that they have asked NATS to come and explain the proposals to them but NATS have refused and many individual members of the public have told us that they have submitted questions to NATS but no answers have been forthcoming.

Stop Stansted Expansion represents some 7,000 members and supporters including 140 parish and town councils, residents' groups, national and local environmental groups and other organisations. We have a reputation for providing fact-based advice and our advice is sought not only by our members but also by tens of thousands of members of the public who contact us directly or use our website to obtain information relating to the operation of Stansted Airport, including information about flight paths and noise impacts. Parish and town councils and other elected representatives including local councillors and MPs also seek our advice on such matters.

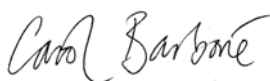
In the case of the TCN consultation we have been overwhelmed with requests for advice and by complaints about the way the consultation is being conducted and NATS' lack of responsiveness. Our own first hand experience lends credibility to these complaints. The only communications we have had from NATS are two letters from your legal department instructing us to remove from our website the information we have provided on the TCN consultation, particularly your new flightpath proposals. We find this quite staggering.

We have two requests to make:

1. Urgent answers to the questions we have asked and information on the alternatives considered together with an explanation of the methodology used for assessing the various options including the scoring basis for ranking each of the main considerations;
2. An undertaking that you will extend the consultation period beyond 22 May 2008 to a later date which allows a reasonable period of time, after having answered our questions and provided the additional information, for the answers and additional information to be considered by ourselves and others who are awaiting our advice.

I would be grateful if you would acknowledge by return receipt of this letter which is being sent by recorded delivery. I am also copying it to Sir Alan Haselhurst MP and Mark Prisk MP who are following this issue closely.

Yours sincerely



Carol Barbone
Campaign Director
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