

**25 MAY 2010: VICTORY!**

**Speech by Peter Sanders, Chairman of Stop Stansted Expansion**

Friends, fellow campaigners,

Yesterday was our day of victory.

Today is our day of celebration.

Now at last we can say: BAA has withdrawn its application for a second runway at Stansted. So many nails had been driven into the coffin of that application. Now at last it's dead and buried.

And our victory and our celebration are all the more sweet because they weren't always certain and assured, and also because they've been so long in coming. At this time of euphoria we're bound to remember that we've been through some very hard and difficult times together.

I shall always remember that dreadful time in June 2002, almost eight years ago now, when the Government published its consultation paper, threatening us not just with a second runway, but possibly a third and even a fourth.

And then, in December 2003, after we had worked so hard to put together our case for rejecting any further expansion, the Government announced in its White Paper that it was going to support a second runway at Stansted.

And when Alastair Darling was reminded that Inspector Eyre had said that a second runway would be an environmental catastrophe, he coolly replied that there had been such an increase in demand that Eyre's warning was no longer relevant.

And so it went on. No matter how strong the case that we presented, we were told time and again, on methods of measuring noise, on climate change, on economic policy, that it wasn't open to us to challenge Government policy as set down in the ATWP.

But we went on challenging Government policy. For six long years we challenged it. And then, in the recent Heathrow judgement, we were told that BAA and the Government could no longer rely on the ATWP. And then with the change of Government, there was a change of policy. For six years we had persisted and persevered. And now that there has been a change of Government and a statement of a new Government policy, within six days BAA has thrown in the towel. It just goes to show how little confidence they had in the economic and environmental case for a second runway.

I was asked yesterday whether or not SSE was responsible for this outcome, or whether it was due to other changes, such as the economic recession or the increasing recognition of the dangers of climate change. And I said then, and I say now, just imagine what would have happened if there had been no opposition, if there had been no SSE. In the ATWP the Government had spoken of the second runway being up and running, or down and running, by 2011/12 - a year from now. There is only one reason why this appalling timetable hasn't been achieved, and that is because of the strength of our opposition, and the opposition of our allies in local government and in the environmental and civic organisations that have worked with us. We tackled the Government, and BAA, on every front, on every issue. We never let them get away with anything. In the end they were so scared of legal challenges that they took months, years, to make decisions. Without our opposition, and that of our allies, the Government would have steamrolled its plans through and we'd have been facing a second runway next year. And in the meantime we lobbied both Conservatives and Lib Dems on the iniquities of a second runway, on the devastation that it would inflict on this beautiful area and on the weakness of the economic case for expansion, and they have now come out on our side.

And at this point I want to thank our MP, Alan Haselhurst, who has been a tremendous support to us throughout the campaign. He would very much have wanted to be with us

today, but he has to deal with the Queen's speech instead. But he says he will be thinking of us and raising a glass in the Speaker's Room. And then, of course, there are the other local MPs and MEPs who have given us so much help and support. And I also want to pay special tribute to those of you who, as well as being supportive members, have played a vital political role as District Councillors as well - Alan Dean of the LibDems, Jackie Cheetham of the Conservatives, and Liz Godwin of the Independents - and others too. One of the great strengths of our campaign has been this powerful co-ordinating link with our local councillors.

So, as I say, we can now rejoice. All of us. Because this has been the most fantastic team effort, I might even say community effort. I can't possibly mention everyone who has contributed to the cause, but I'll do my best to pay tribute to at least some of them.

First I want to thank all the footsoldiers of our organisation, the bloody infantry, or, as far as BAA was concerned, the bloody-minded infantry, those of you who have stuffed envelopes, trugged from door to door selling cards and calendars, put up posters and billboards (when I mention the Last of the Summer Wine they'll know who I mean), those of you who have organised and prepared food for our fund-raising activities. And some of these activities have now become annual events in our social calendar - the Broxted quiz and the Broxted race night, the Burns Night Supper at Birchanger, the Duton Hill quiz, the Runway Ramble, the Stansted quiz, our bookstall and trailer at the Countess of Warwick Show, the cycle rides, the sheep roast in the Godwins' garden, and a host of one-off events as well. Only this Friday, in three days' time, we have the Little Easton Theatre Supper. In the course of our campaign we've raised almost a million pounds - a million pounds which in the event has far outweighed the £200m spent by BAA on this application alone.

It's difficult to mention names, but I know that all the calendar and card sellers would want me to pay a special tribute to Ken and Janice McDonald, and also to Ray Woodcock, who also organised our trailer. They achieved astonishing results, and without the money they raised, over £30,000 every year, we could never have achieved what we've done.

And then there has been our little office in Takeley. Staffed by Moya Bayford and others in the early years, then Ian Hobson, and then Denise Williams and Sarah Cousins. It's not only been superbly efficient and reliable, an absolutely solid rock of helpfulness and dependability, but it's always been a wonderfully friendly place. I know I'm speaking for many others as well as for myself when I say that it's always been a real pleasure to go into that little room and to be greeted in such a warm and friendly way. It has been a real lift to our spirits, it has cheered us on

Then there is our website, run by Peter Riding, with support from Pat Dale and others. That website is so good that even our opponents have to consult it. And, incidentally, what a wonderful photographic record we have of our campaign. And don't forget our Stansted wood, inaugurated by our good friend and patron, Terry Waite, and now established at Broxted Hill Farm on the site of the proposed runway as a sign and symbol of our determination that that runway was never going to be built. BAA laughed at our little wood - but it's not laughing now. The wood is there and the runway isn't.

Now I come to our Response Committee, our panel of experts. Jangu Banatvala on health, Chris Bennett and then Martin Peachey on noise, Ken McDonald on roads, John Rhodes on railways, Pat Dale on air pollution, Douglas Kent on ancient buildings, Ian Bruce on water, Peter Gowan on aviation, Mike Young on all things statistical and economic, John Drake on landscape, Jacky Cooper on the historic landscape, Martin Dillon and David Hall on the law, Peter Riding on our website, and, until his tragic accident, Douglas Brookes, our professional pilot, who, as well as vegetables from his allotment, gave us advice and information on all sorts of practical considerations. But two members of that Committee I want to pick out for special mention.

The first is Maggie Sutton. Maggie, with the support of her family, has been the living heart of our organisation. Not only working hard to present our case on the impact on the community, but helping to hold our community together, looking after Carol, and looking after the rest of us too.

The second is Brian Ross, who signs himself off as our economics adviser. He is of course far more than that. He is, quite simply, a phenomenon. I have described him before as the jack of all trades and the master of them all as well. I'm constantly amazed by his grasp of the issues and the force and the clarity and the cogency with which he presents them. And his energy is amazing - how often do we get emails from Brian written at one or two in the morning? Let's be quite frank. He really ought to have been chairman of this organisation. And do you know why he isn't? Because he says that he has too short a temper: he might say the wrong thing at the wrong time. I mean, did you ever hear such nonsense? I can speak from eight years' experience, and I am sure that Julie will agree with me, that he is the most sweet-tempered and mild-mannered man you could ever wish to meet. Even his jokes aren't all that bad.

And now I want to pay tribute to Carol Barbone. What a stroke of luck it was for us that she was a working partner with Melissa Cowley, and that when Melissa couldn't take on the work as campaign director she recommended Carol. Carol is another phenomenon. She is utterly committed to our cause - if there was such a thing as the freedom of Uttlesford she should be given it: at least, Carol, we can make you an honorary Essex woman. And on top of that commitment Carol is immensely able and energetic. You know that if something needs to be done she'll be there to do it: in fact, she's probably done it already. And she's a superb draftsman, or should I say draughtsperson. I come from a civil service background and I can be rather fussy about language. But there's never any need to be fussy with what Carol writes. And she's taught me a new language - campaign English, which is very different from civil service prose.

And finally, Norman Mead. How we wish, Beryl, that Norman could have been present with us today, to share in this wonderful occasion. It was Norman who drove NWEHPA in the long years when it appeared that nothing was happening. It was Norman who so willingly took on the role of our first chairman. And it was Norman who guided us through those difficult first years. It wasn't just that he was amazing knowledgeable, but there was a fundamental decency and straightforwardness about him that won the respect

even of his most implacable opponents. I have likened Norman before to a kind of Moses. He led us to this Promised Land, and although he wasn't able to enter into that land himself he made sure that we would.

So here we are, eight years after the publication of that notorious consultation paper. Eight years of blight and uncertainty. Eight years of struggle. But, my friends, we have rallied our forces and we have held the pass against BAA and against all those time-serving Secretaries of State who have backed it up. Our work isn't yet over. We must now make sure that the rejection of any additional runways is written into the National Policy Statement on aviation that will be drawn up next year under the new planning legislation, and we must make sure that that commitment is as firm and secure and as permanent as we can achieve. There is still important work to be done, and, I can assure you, we won't relax. But in the meantime, let us, quite simply, rejoice and celebrate.

Friends, I give you a toast - to SSE.

Thank you all very much.