



**PRESS RELEASE**  
from  
**PETER AINSWORTH MP**  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Press release for immediate release: 17 September 2008

**EAST SURREY MP REACTS TO GATWICK  
AIRPORT SALE ANNOUNCEMENT**

East Surrey MP, Peter Ainsworth, has expressed caution over the future of Gatwick Airport following today's announcement that it has been put up for sale.

Gatwick's owners, BAA, have made the decision to sell the airport as a result of an interim ruling by the Competition Commission, which had raised concerns over the company's market dominance.

The airport has been valued at £1.8 billion, and was used by 35 million passengers in 2007. Several firms have already shown an interest in the sale, including Virgin Atlantic.

Commenting on the announcement, Peter Ainsworth said:

*"Following the Competition Commission Report earlier this summer, which indicated that BAA should be required to sell off some of its businesses in order to increase competition between UK airports, this news is not unexpected. BAA's announcement should at least mark the beginning of the end of the uncertainty which has faced Gatwick staff over recent months. Inevitably, the sale is likely to take some time to complete, but I hope that matters can be resolved as soon as possible for all concerned.*

*"Gatwick employs, directly and indirectly, over 25,000 people in the local area, and is especially vital to the economic wellbeing of Horley. I support Gatwick as a successful one runway airport. There must be some concern that any new owner will increase the pressure to build another runway after 2019, when the single runway legal agreement expires. Any prospective bidder for Gatwick should be aware that such a proposal would meet with fierce and united opposition. A further runway would not only mean an unacceptable increase in noise and carbon pollution, but also involve the building of thousands of new homes on greenfield land, and place an intolerable strain on local roads and other services.*

*"The collapse of XL tells us that these are already very uncertain times for the aviation industry, and my thoughts are with those whose jobs depend on the future success of Gatwick."*

ENDS

PRESS CONTACT: 020 7219 6880