

The decision by the Airports Commission in their Interim Report to narrow the choice for the location of a new runway to either Heathrow or Gatwick is bad news for everywhere within twenty miles of Gatwick, and indeed the whole of the South East.<sup>1</sup> And the runway option the Commission have picked for detailed examination is the so-called wide-spaced option - the one with the runway close to Crawley, and the one which would do the most environmental damage.

There is no point in trying to guess whether Heathrow or Gatwick will eventually be recommended. The need now is for everyone who cares for this area to resolve to protect it. For the action you can take - see page 4.

## What happens next?

### 2014

**16 January** - Publication of the 'Appraisal Framework', the list of criteria on which the two options at Heathrow and one at Gatwick will be assessed. For example the number of houses to be demolished, number of listed buildings to be demolished, the number of people affected by noise etc, etc. Consultation will run until **28 February**. We, and local councils, will need to ensure that our concerns are fully covered, for example if we feel that the impact on Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty is important or if, in the light of recent events, we feel that a large new area of tarmac will cause more flooding on the River Mole downstream, we will need to ensure that these are included in the criteria.<sup>2</sup>

**9 May** - Airports to submit detailed plans. Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) will need to produce - which they haven't done yet - plans showing the layout of the proposed new airport, how close the runway would be to Crawley, where the new terminal would be, which roads would be closed, diverted or put into tunnels. Each airport will be required to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment on the new plans, which will be 'quality assured' by the Commission (to ensure no cheating by either airport).

**October** - Commission publishes the plans and appraisal results, and opens public consultation on the three schemes. That is the time when we will need you all to make your views known.

### 2015

**June/July** - publication of final recommendation. After that - and indubitably also in the run-up to the election in May 2015 - there will be an intense political debate. If the [next] Government decides to proceed with the Gatwick option, an airports National Policy Statement would be put to Parliament, followed by a planning application which would go through on the fast-track system with little opportunity for local input or cross-examination.

BUT perhaps at some stage, despite the hysteria in the press, despite the high pressure PR by Gatwick Airport, common sense will prevail. It will be noted that the Airports Commission Interim Report forecasts that Stansted will not be full until after 2040, and it will be realised that it would make no economic sense, no environmental sense and no financial sense to build a new runway at Gatwick while Stansted remains under-used.

## Urbanisation

GACC has repeatedly warned that a new runway is not just a strip of concrete but would mean twice as many aircraft in the sky, twice the pollution, twice the climate change damage, twice the noise, and new flight paths over peaceful areas. But the issue which is emerging is that making Gatwick larger than Heathrow would lead to the urbanisation of much of Surrey and Sussex. Doubling the number of airport jobs, and airport related jobs, plus an influx of hundreds of new firms (as so passionately desired by the Gatwick Diamond business association) would mean that a large number of workers would be attracted into the area from the rest of the UK or from the EU. A report commissioned by the West Sussex County Council (WSCC) and the Gatwick Diamond found that there would be a need for around 40,000 extra houses equivalent to adding 1,000 new houses to each of forty villages.<sup>3</sup>

GACC has discussed this issue with WSCC officers. The county and district councils are negotiating with Gatwick Airport with the aim of getting them to pay for any road improvements needed to cope with the extra road traffic due to air passengers and extra airport staff, eg improving Junction 9 on the M23, and diverting the A23. But they have not taken on board that the new houses, and the new firms would all generate traffic - more cars, more white vans and more HGVs. Every road junction for miles around would become congested, and there is no plan to make the airport pay for improvements to local roads.

Nor is it clear who is going to pay for the new schools and the new hospitals.

## Economic benefits - but who benefits??

Gatwick Airport claims that a new runway would create economic benefits worth billions of pounds. But it needs to be asked - who would get these benefits? A few hundred unemployed people would get jobs, but apart from them, there would be no benefit for most people who are today living in the Gatwick area. There is no reason to expect that ordinary families living in Crawley, or Horsham, or East Grinstead, or wherever, would be a penny better off.

For the first few years thousands of construction workers, followed by thousands of house-builders, would need to move into the area. There would be economic benefits for them. Once the airport was up and running, and operating at full capacity, there would be thousands more airport workers each earning an income, but they too would need to migrate into the area. And the hundreds of new firms would also need to import most of their staff. So, yes, the total income of the area as a whole would be much higher. But almost all the extra income would go to the newcomers.

As a broad generalisation the people who at present live in Surrey and Sussex and Kent would not be a penny better off.

It was the lure of economic benefits which persuaded West Sussex County Council to pass their rushed, undemocratic, un-thought-through vote in favour of a new runway. In a way, they were correct: a new runway would mean more people coming to live in Sussex, more new companies, existing firms expanding, higher total income, and higher council tax receipts. Sussex bigger, more urbanised, more commercial.

But for most ordinary people living in the area at present there would be no economic benefit, just longer queues at road junctions, longer queues at the doctors and at the hospitals, larger classes for their children, more noise, and fewer green fields.

A vote for a new runway is a vote for a worse quality of life for local residents !

## **Blight**

The shortening of the odds in favour of Gatwick will worsen the blight which is likely to affect around 18,000 houses. People will have difficulty selling their houses, and those who need to move either to a new job or for retirement will suffer anxiety and financial loss.

GACC had joined with other airport groups to suggest to the Airports Commission that they should make it a condition of an airport being included in the short-list that they produced a blight relief scheme. But the Commission have declined to do so, merely suggesting that the owners of Heathrow and Gatwick should look kindly on hard cases.<sup>4</sup>

## **Noise Action Plan - a bodged job!**

The EU Environmental Noise Directive requires member states to prepare noise action plans for improving the noise situation around roads, airports, town centres etc. The UK Government has delegated the responsibility for airports ... to airports. Like setting the fox to devise a plan for locking the hen house door! The result is that Gatwick airport treat the issue with contempt. When the first Noise Action Plan (NAP) was produced in 2009 GACC and many others put a great deal of work into suggesting ways in which aircraft noise could be reduced. Virtually all suggestions were ignored, leading to scepticism about the value of consultations.

In November 2013 it was suddenly announced that the NAP was to be revised, and extended for three years to 2018. An Incredibly botched draft was produced full of typographical errors, and with few new ideas, and we were given only four days in which to comment. GACC and others protested to the Government, and the time was extended to three weeks. We immediately informed our members by email, and have submitted a tough response.<sup>5</sup>

## **Night Flights - risk of more**

The number of night flights at Gatwick is limited to a quota of an average of about 50 per night, and noise at night is limited by another quota. A year ago the Department for Transport produced a Stage 1 consultation on all aspects of night flights. GACC submitted a detailed response.<sup>6</sup> But to our surprise, the Department have now announced that any changes will be postponed until 2017. More scepticism about consultation.

The number quota is 10% above actual number last summer, and the noise quota is 20 % above. Last winter the quotas were even further above the actual use. While less than full use is welcome, the danger in leaving the quotas unchanged is that this could permit a very substantial increase in noise at night (for example if Gatwick succeeds in their much trumpeted aim of attracting more routes to the Far East using larger aircraft). GACC is demanding that the quotas should be reduced to match the level of current use. In an ideal world we would obviously wish to see no night flights, but reducing quotas to match current use is the only change that we regard as politically achievable in the light of the Government's blanket 'no change' policy. Please write to support us. Consultation ends 31 January.<sup>7</sup>

## **Danger - Flight Path changes ahead !**

Gatwick Airport and NATS have launched a ridiculous consultation on redesigning all flight paths around Gatwick. It is asking people for their views on where flight paths should be - which invites everyone to say 'not over my house', while others who may be unaware of what is going on are left at a disadvantage. GAL / NATS are then proposing to design new flight paths to avoid sensitive areas (or to design the new routes for the convenience of the aviation industry, as is usual with consultations) and are refusing to publish any maps until after the new routes are fixed. Then tell everyone that they can't complain because they were consulted!

GACC is demanding that when new provisional flight paths have been designed the maps must be published and there must then be a second consultation when the public can see what is proposed before any final decision. Please support our request when you respond - the consultation ends 21 January.<sup>8</sup>

All we know definitely is that there will be increased use of a currently unused departure flight path over the eastern side of Horsham, and different routes over Sussex and west Kent for arriving aircraft. As a result of improved navigational equipment (airborne Satnavs) flight paths in future will be narrower. The Government and the aviation industry claim that this will be a great improvement as fewer people will be affected by aircraft noise. But that ignores the fact that life for people under the narrow flight paths will be much worse.

GACC has produced a detailed brief for the benefit of those who may wish to respond, and we have also produced a draft response.<sup>9</sup> This is in general terms because, since GACC represents all areas around the airport, we cannot support moving flight paths from one community to another.

*All that is in relation to the existing runway. With a new runway every existing flight path would be matched by another, most of them over areas at present peaceful.*

## Whining A320

Some versions of the A320 aircraft make an ear-splitting whine when coming in to land. This has led to many complaints from the Tunbridge Wells area. GACC has taken it up in the airport noise committee and with the Transport Department; has discovered that it is due to small fuel pressure release valves under the wings; that it is also causing complaints in other countries. We primed the Director of the Aviation Environment Federation to raise the matter with the Airbus management when he met them in Toulouse. Modifications are possible but currently there is argument between airlines and the manufacturer about who should pay.

## What YOU can do

1. Make sure that your local parish council, and your local Borough / District council is firmly opposed to a new runway.
2. Persuade your friends and neighbours to join GACC, or become supporters (free). Make sure that your parish council and your local amenity society are members. The more members we have, the stronger our voice.
3. Write to a national or local newspaper opposing a new runway.
4. Parish, District and Borough councils may wish to hold debates on the runway issue, and GACC will be pleased to provide a speaker.
5. Look at our website [www.gacc.org.uk](http://www.gacc.org.uk) in order to keep up to date with the arguments.
- 6 Share and like our new Facebook page  
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Do-You-Care/246222432213895>

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<sup>1</sup> Airports Commission Interim Report  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/266668/airports-commission-interim-report.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/266668/airports-commission-interim-report.pdf)

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<sup>2</sup> For a description of the chaos at Gatwick on Christmas Eve see <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2529289/Shame-Third-World-Gatwick-U-S-owners-face-probe-airport-leaves-thousands-stranded-squalor.html>

<sup>3</sup> [Implications of changes to airport capacity - slides 2013](#) (page 17)

<sup>4</sup> Airports Commission Interim Report (see note 1) paragraphs 7.16 – 7.19

<sup>5</sup> [www.gacc.org.uk/the-environment](http://www.gacc.org.uk/the-environment)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news.php>

<sup>7</sup> Consultation at <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/night-flights> .

GACC draft response [www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news](http://www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news)

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.londonairspaceconsultation.co.uk/?page\\_id=37](http://www.londonairspaceconsultation.co.uk/?page_id=37)

<sup>9</sup> [www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news](http://www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news)