

Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign **GACC**

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Runway Exhibitions a huge success – for the opposition!

Gatwick Airport Ltd have held 16 exhibitions to explain their runway proposals, and the final one will be held at Copthorne on Tuesday 6 May. Over 6,000 people in total have attended but, according to GACC, the vast majority were clearly opposed to any new runway.

GACC volunteers have manned a 'picket line' outside each exhibition, handing out leaflets and car stickers, and recruiting new members. According to the GACC chairman Brendon Sewill, 'people were coming out of the hall horrified at what they had seen, and queuing up to join GACC.

At Edenbridge the highly respected MP for Tonbridge, Sir John Stanley, organised a mass demonstration against aircraft noise and against any new runway. At Horsham over 100 people marched through the town to protest at the new flight path over Warnham and north Horsham and to oppose any new runway.

Typical comments from the public were: -

- 'I just had not realised how huge it would be.'
- 'We don't need the extra jobs here, they should be up North.'
- 'They won't tell us where the new flight paths would be.'
- 'It's horrific.'
- 'The roads would be hell.'
- 'It's all spin, they don't tell you the real facts.'

GACC is the main environmental body concerned with Gatwick. Founded in 1968, we have as members nearly 100 Borough, District and Parish Councils and environmental groups covering about a twenty miles radius from the airport. Our committee, elected annually, represents all areas. Because we rely on rational argument and put forward constructive solutions we have had strong support in Parliament and at every level of government.

- ‘The hospitals and doctors can’t cope at present, what will it be like with all this?’

GACC considered the exhibitions unsatisfactory because: -

1. they were designed to sell the project, not to explain the impact.
2. there was no clear explanation of how the noise would increase.
3. there was no indication of how the infrastructure – roads, rail, housing, hospitals, schools etc. would be able to cope with an enlarged airport.
4. a false choice was presented between three runway options, with no easy way to register a vote for no new runway.

Nevertheless GACC feel that the exhibitions have alerted the public and have demonstrated the strength of feeling against the proposals.

At all the exhibitions GACC volunteers maintained a friendly relationship with the airport staff, and GACC is grateful to Gatwick for often allowing us to use the lobby of the hall where the exhibition was held.



Photo shows protest outside the Horsham exhibition. CAGNE is a new local group based on Warnham, and is a member of GACC.

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