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MPs speak out against second runway

Five Members of Parliament were on the platform, and three more sent messages of support, at a mass protest meeting on Saturday 22 November organised by the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC). That is all the MPs from around Gatwick, and helps to disprove the assumption in some national newspapers that Gatwick would politically be the easiest option for a new runway.

The MPs were united in expressing their concern about new flight paths and about the threat of a second runway. Extracts from their speeches and messages are attached.

Over 1,000 people crammed into the Apple Tree Centre in Crawley, and were welcomed by three racy air hostesses, and by the Mayor of Crawley, Cllr Brenda Smith who later, speaking as the local councillor, expressed her deep-felt opposition to a new runway.

Some twenty national and local environmental groups set up stands around the hall and answered questions from anxious members of the public.

Questions from the floor were answered by a panel of experts which included Keith Taylor (Member European Parliament), Cait Hewitt (Aviation Environment Federation), Sarah Clayton (AirportWatch), Sally Pavey (CAGNE), Richard Streatfeild (High Weald Councils Aviation Action Group), and Brendon Sewill (GACC) under the chairmanship of Cllr Helyn Clack (Surrey County Council).

The meeting unanimously held up large cards saying NO when asked if they were in favour of new flight paths, and held up the NO cards again when asked if they were in favour of a second runway.

The afternoon concluded with 1,000 people singing 'What shall we do with Gatwick Airport' to the tune of the Drunken Sailor.

Extracts from MPs' speeches and messages

Cabinet member Rt Hon Francis Maude (Horsham) was abroad on Government business but sent a message: *'As you know, I have always opposed a second runway at Gatwick. We all know that there are big advantages for our area in having a successful airport as a*

centre for jobs and business, and I support Gatwick's expansion as a single runway airport. That remains my view.'

Crispin Blunt MP (Reigate) told the meeting why he had organised the Gatwick Co-ordination Group of MPs - because a second runway would be a *'disaster for surrounding communities and environment.'* Many areas are being *'appallingly affected by PRNAV'* [the new system of concentrated flight paths].

Nicholas Soames (Mid Sussex). *'A second runway would be a disaster for our local environment. ... 120,000 extra people - where they are expected to go is beyond me.... The London to Brighton railway line is already at full capacity - impossible to upgrade sufficiently. .. We must oppose this with all the power we have.'*

Henry Smith (Crawley) noted that *'public opinion in Crawley is divided. ... There would be a significant impact on housing and infrastructure - school places, GP surgery sizes, healthcare - a need for a new hospital. ... Gatwick have not made the case for expansion here.'*

Sam Gyimah (East Surrey) sent a message: *New flight paths have caused misery for my constituents, which is why I have called for Gatwick to abandon its implementation of the PRNAV system. I would like to congratulate GACC for organising this meeting, and your ongoing work to hold Gatwick to account over these changes and the possibility of a second runway, which could cause significant environmental damage and pressure on local infrastructure.*

Sir John Stanley (Tonbridge) sent this message: *'I am totally opposed to Gatwick's new flight path proposals which will make the already intolerable noise disturbance still more intolerable. I am also totally opposed to a second runway at Gatwick.'*

Charles Hendry (Wealden) commented on *'the extraordinarily huge meeting here today. ... Gatwick has not been straight with us and are not good neighbours. If they are not good neighbours today, then the possible doubling in size is intolerable. A second runway does not make economic sense and it does not make environmental sense.'*

Sir Paul Beresford (Mole Valley) told the meeting that a second runway would mean *'putting a city on Gatwick'....'public transport links are already overburdened'... 'M25 is a parking lot'.....'national businesses are not impressed with Gatwick's proposal.'*

Note

A list of the stands, and text of the air hostesses' announcement can be found on www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news