



Department for
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J. Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 4 December 2007 about the management of Kent International (Manston) Airport, particularly in relation to environmental issues and the organisation of the consultative committee.

As I believe you are aware, environmental controls at the airport are essentially covered by a section 106 (planning) agreement entered into by the airport and Thanet District Council which covers areas such as night flying, limitation of noise contour, noise insulation scheme, noise abatement routes, noise/pollution monitoring, engine testing etc. However, as I am sure that you will appreciate, the Department for Transport does not have a role in enforcing planning controls or section 106 agreements. This is a matter for Thanet District Council as the Local Planning Authority working with the airport.

I do of course accept that environmental impacts such as noise and air pollution can arise from the operation and development of airports. The 2003 Air Transport White Paper *The Future of Air Transport* recognised this and set out a clear policy for how these challenges should be addressed.


Our objective continues to be to strike a fair balance between the benefits provided by airports, such as job creation, and any costs imposed on nearby residents. The Government's position – as set out in the White Paper – is that the number of people significantly affected by aircraft noise should be limited and, where possible, reduced. But we are also committed to the principle of local decisions on airports being taken locally wherever possible rather than being imposed by the Government. However designation of an airport under

section 35 of the Civil Aviation Act 1982 - as has happened at Kent International - does, as you suggest, require the airport management to provide adequate facilities for consultation. This is generally best achieved through a consultative committee.

In your letter you mention that, following a period of transition at the airport, the consultative committee is now meeting regularly to discuss environmental and other concerns with the airport's managers. I understand that representatives from Thanet District Council, local parish councils, residents associations and the Manston Airport Group, have all been working in the committee with airport representatives to review procedures and discuss possible improvements. I also understand that the Council is researching several aspects of the original section 106 Agreement and that the airport has undertaken to circulate a paper to the committee with proposals for improving complaints procedures.

I also understand from the minutes of the November consultative committee meeting that you have recently received a briefing on the airport. I welcome these developments and consider local consultative committee to be the best forum for achieving further constructive progress on these important matters.

/ Lastly, on the issue of funding administrative costs of airport consultative committees, the Department's guidelines (copy enclosed for ease of reference) recommends that these should be met in such a way as the committee may determine but that the default option is for the airport to cover expenses. It is not expected that the committee would normally meet individuals' expenses. The guidelines also provide advice on the composition of consultative committees.

Yours Sincerely


JIM FITZPATRICK