

DR. CAROLINE LUCAS

Green Party  
*for the South East of England*

Jonathan Shaw MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Marine,  
Landscape and Rural Affairs  
DEFRA  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London SW1P 3JR

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Dear Jonathan,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Minister for the South East of England and as the Under Secretary of State with responsibility for the quality of the local environment. I wish to raise some questions about the management of noise in the areas surrounding Gatwick airport and other airports.

As you will be aware, the Environmental Noise Directive requires national governments to develop noise strategies and to draw up noise maps. I note that the latter are already available for Gatwick and other airports via the DEFRA website. In my view the legislation is flawed, however, in that it does not impose any maximum limit values. One result is that member states are essentially permitted to 'redistribute' noise, eg by addressing levels in urban areas by moving the problem to rural areas, rather than tackling overall levels across the country.

Certainly, my constituents feel that this is already the case, citing the fact that Gatwick has recently sought to narrow the flight path for inbound aircraft, leading to a reduction in noise levels in the immediate vicinity of the airport yet an increase elsewhere. The mapping of current noise levels at Gatwick shows a reduction in levels as we move away from the airport, as one might expect. Yet the levels are not mapped over a particularly large area and this means that it will be difficult to assess the impact of any noise reduction strategies on the wider environs of Gatwick.

The government needs to have drawn up action plans to manage noise by July 2008 and I would appreciate the following questions being addressed:

- Will additional mapping take place so as to adequately monitor the impact of noise reduction measures on areas beyond those currently mapped, both with regard to Gatwick and other UK airports?
- Will any action plans be mindful of the need to avoid 'redistributing' noise and focus instead on overall reduction?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Caroline Lucas - Green Party MEP for South East England.