

Brussels, 4 03. 2008
A(2008)102 - D(2008)244

Dear Dr Lucas,

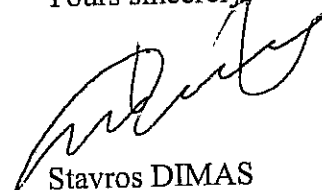
Thank you for letter of 18th December 2007 in which you raise air pollution in relation to the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

As you are aware, the expansion of airports fall within the remit of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive 85/337/EEC and the Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive 2001/42/EC. While the Commission cannot identify a breach of the provisions of these Directives at this stage, it will continue to follow developments to ensure compliance with EU legislation.

In its 'Project for the sustainable development of Heathrow' the UK government committed to consider adding a 3rd runway at Heathrow airport only after public consultation and in compliance with strict conditions on air quality. As regards air pollution, Directive 99/30/EC sets limit values on particulate matter PM₁₀ and nitrogen dioxide. Technical reports¹ on the expansion of Heathrow Airport, available to the public, do not indicate exceedances of PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} limit values. These reports however suggest that limit values for nitrogen dioxide would be exceeded in 2010 as well as 2015. It is for the UK authorities to assess the impact of infrastructure projects and to ensure that all relevant environmental standards are respected before, during and after their implementation. UK competent authorities may decide to introduce additional measures in order to bring the area of Heathrow Airport into compliance by the relevant date.

Let me assure you that the Commission will closely monitor air quality trends and will enforce compliance if a breach is identified. The Commission is already monitoring the implementation of the air quality plan for London, as required by the air quality Directive 96/62/EC. The London air quality plan has to take account of any major spatial development in the area that will have an impact on concentration levels as is the case for the expansion of Heathrow Airport.

Yours sincerely,



Stavros DIMAS

Dr Caroline Lucas, MEP
Green Party for South East England
Suite 58, The Hop Exchange, 24 Southwark Street
UK-London SE1 1TY

¹ Available at <http://www.dft.gov.uk/consultations/open/heathrowconsultation/technicalreports/>