

SOUTHEND AIRSPACE

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Members views as to whether to support the views of London Southend Airport in respect of the reorganisation of airspace north of London.

2 DETAILED CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 The Chief Executive has received the attached letter from London Southend Airport, giving details of proposals being developed by National Air Traffic Services (NATS) in respect of the management of the airspace north of London.
- 2.2 The Airport's view is that whilst the issues are currently under consideration by NATS, there are concerns that the proposals that eventually emerge might have a negative impact on the future of the Airport. The Airport therefore seeks our support at this stage in attempting to influence NATS thinking by suggesting a solution which safeguards the Airport's position. That solution is outlined on page 2 of the Airport's letter.

3 RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 That the Executive Board **RESOLVES** to support London Southend Airport's stance and comment to the National Air Traffic Services accordingly.

Paul Warren

Chief Executive

Background Papers:-

London Southend Airport letter from Andrew Walters dated 22nd June 2007.

For further information please contact Paul Warren on:-

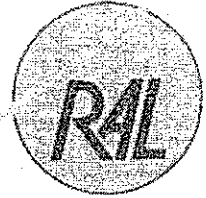
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If you would like this report in large print, braille or another language please contact 01702 546366.

London Southend Airport

The London FBO and Aviation Support Centre



22nd June 2007

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Dear Paul

SOUTHEND AIRSPACE

As you may be aware, National Air Traffic Services (NATS) is currently planning a significant reorganisation of the airspace to the north of London, known as the Terminal Control Area North (TCN), which covers Stansted, Luton, London City Airport and London Southend and also has an impact on Cambridge and Norwich.

My purpose in writing to you is to highlight that the proposals currently being developed by NATS could restrict the operational efficiency of Southend, and therefore prejudice the success of our plans to develop the airport and secure new commercial passenger services. This would damage the economic development opportunity of the town and wider community, reduce our ability to contribute to the growth of the Thames Gateway, and make Southend potentially less attractive as an airport which could serve the Olympic Games in 2012.

The reorganisation of airspace is certainly necessary given the growth in traffic that has occurred at Heathrow, Stansted and London City, but I believe that the solution being developed by NATS is less than optimal, and that an alternative exists which would have better environmental credentials and would not prejudice the interests of Southend or, indeed, other airports.

Our concerns are essentially as follows:

- at present, flights into London City, which have grown significantly in recent years, occasionally use an established holding point over Southend; the use of this hold has increased noticeably over the last year and is expected to increase further; the minimum height at which aircraft are held is 4,000 feet but they are not under the control of Southend's Air Traffic Controllers and these circling flights make a noticeable and annoying noise impact which is often wrongly associated with Southend Airport's activities;
- holding London City flights over Southend like this, or routing London City flights directly over Southend, impacts on our own operations as our departing flights are restricted by either a time delay, or by having to stay below a maximum of 3,000 feet until they are outside controlled airspace and clear of the London City inbound flights. Our principal customer, Ford, dislikes this and finds it a drawback from their previous operations at Stansted. If the trend of using this hold for inbound London City flights does increase then the impact on Southend and our other new customers will simply get worse.

The solution we propose is as follows:

- there should not be a hold over Southend or near Southend. London City should have its own hold over the Thames Estuary where it will have a much lower environmental impact and no impact on Southend or South Essex residents;
- there should be no inbound flights to London City over Southend, as there are today, directly overhead the air field. Our Air Traffic Controllers believe that London City flights should be routed south of the Shoeburyness firing range and fly along the Thames rather than over the populations of Southend and south Essex; we believe this alternative routing can be easily achieved, albeit it will result in some increase in flying distances for a small percentage of City flights (those to and from Scotland and Manchester in particular).
- Southend Airport must make an urgent application to the CAA's Directorate of Airspace Policy to be granted control over a wider area around Southend, as used to happen prior to the CAA reducing our zone size in 1994.

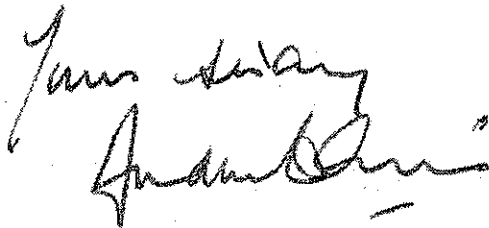
The idea of a Thames Estuary hold was originally proposed by NATS itself but was not progressed due, I understand, to internal administrative issues and the fact that NATS' regional boundaries run along the Thames. Yet we understand that operationally there is no problem with a Thames Estuary hold.

These issues are currently being actively considered by NATS, and it is proposed that once their proposals are finalised there will be a public consultation starting in Autumn this year. I am concerned, however, that we seek to shape NATS' thinking before any plans are published as, by then, there is a real risk that all their planning and simulation work will be complete and the scope to secure changes will be minimal.

I fully understand that Southend is a very small voice in the overall airspace management and wider aviation debate, and that London City is currently a much larger airport. However, the results of this current review of airspace are likely to stay in effect for at least a decade or more, and if the opportunity is not taken now to remove the current conflicts between London City and Southend aircraft movements then the opportunity could be lost for a very long time. London City is all but full – it is certainly exceeding the total number of annual aircraft movements permitted by its planning consents – while Southend has the capacity to grow and take up some of the growing demand for air travel.

I very much hope you will be willing to do all you can to impress on NATS the importance of these issues, and in particular the merits of establishing a new Thames Estuary hold.

I look forward to hearing from you and if, in the meantime, there is any further information that you require then please do not hesitate to call me.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Walters', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Walters
Chairman