

## **TR020002 Manston Airport DCO Application by RSP Ltd**

### **Personal submission for Deadline 8: Tricia Hartley**

I am a Ramsgate resident and registered as an interested party.

I attended two of the recent special interest hearings at Discovery Park and was shocked at how little information has yet emerged into the public domain about this application:

- Financial information is sketchy, and what exists is wreathed in obscurity. The ExA's patient questioning about parent companies, majority interests and transparency was persistently blocked by RSP Ltd's QC on grounds of commercial confidentiality.
- A business plan to revive an airport that has failed many times has to be something very special: RSP's appears to exist on a single side of A4. Azimuth Associates, on whose report so much of RSP's case appears to hinge, admit that they were not asked to comment on the viability of the proposal.
- The jobs projections included in the original submission have been repeatedly questioned and appear on further examination to include national and international jobs, so the number of jobs expected to be created for local people is still unclear but seems to be decreasing daily. An 'employment and skills group' convened by RSP has apparently met and plans are afoot for aviation-related training, but very little information as to the membership of the group or its plans is available.
- Information on noise contours conflicts with two separate independent studies commissioned at their own expense by residents. RSP's noise contour map shows little impact except in the immediate vicinity of the runway – yet their initial documentation speaks of 'significant adverse effects' on quality of life in Ramsgate.

As I understand it, the Human Rights Act requires that individuals whose enjoyment of their homes and liberty is compromised by a Government decision must have been given sufficient information and opportunity to challenge this. Time is running out for RSP Ltd to provide residents with the information they have been asking for.

In order to justify 'significant adverse effects' on a population of over 40,000 souls (not to mention the other communities also affected) we would have hoped to see a project of considerable size and ambition, backed with cast-iron guarantees and headed up by a field of aviation experts. Instead we have the former director of several failed airport companies and a group of US real estate brokers, supported by Azimuth whose use of data has been constantly challenged throughout the examination process, with anonymous alleged backers in Tortola in the BVI (transferred, apparently for 'transparency', from Belize...)

There can be only two justifications for destroying the quality of life of a community as this proposal will do to Ramsgate – a burning national need that cannot be met otherwise or the creation of a huge number of jobs for local people that would transform the local economy.

It does not appear that either of these is the case:

- Stansted, Heathrow and East Midlands Airports all have spare freight capacity
- The dedicated air cargo market is reducing, with most cargo flown in bellyhold

- The road network around Manston is inadequate for onward road transport
- The airport is surrounded on 3 sides by sea, limiting both transport routes and expansion potential

Regarding jobs, the Examining Authority pointed out at recent hearings that RSP's jobs projection (1021 staff in Year 20) is nearly double the number employed by the long-running and successful East Midlands airport. The number of staff employed at Manston in its previous incarnations was considerably less than half the RSP projection – and cargo handling is an increasingly automated process, reducing the need for staff.

Meanwhile if the DCO was accepted the area would lose jobs in the visitor economy, which would suffer from the damage done to tourism by noise and pollution – and the plans of legal owners of the site for a business park with high quality jobs and training, which have had to be put on hold throughout this protracted process, would disappear altogether.

During the hearings earlier this month, Prestwick Airport was offered as a possible comparator for this project, particularly in terms of job density. It will not have escaped the Examining Authority's notice that Prestwick has just been put up for sale, having been purchased for £1 with its debts just as Manston was.

Prestwick has not been able to rid itself of its debts. It is difficult to see how Manston will be able to avoid repeating the same story – one only too familiar to those who have followed the saga of Manston's several previous incarnations.

Manston is an unsuitable location for a commercial airport – hence its not being mentioned by the Davies Commission or any other body considering overspill for London – and RSP Ltd is a quite unsuitable company to run an airport. I urge you to reject this DCO proposal.