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Manston Airport DCO

I was, as you will appreciate, devastated to learn on Thursday that the Department has sought to extend the decision process for the Manston Airport DCO by a further four months. This process has been the subject of a protracted public inquiry and the PINS report has, I understand, already been with your Department for three months.

I appreciate that the General Election has intervened and that there has, additionally, been a Christmas recess and I know that decisions on other DCOs have also as a result been delayed but this does rather make a nonsense of a facility that is designed to take the pain out of major infrastructure planning and to inspire multi-million-pound investor confidence.

I appreciate that because of your aviation interests you have had to recuse yourself from taking the decision and that you are therefore not directly involved in this application. I also know that your policy to promote the development of and investment in ports and airports remains commendably intact and I applaud the Department's support for Flybe in the teeth of competitor and environmental opposition.

Nevertheless, it is a fact that if the UK is to survive and prosper post-Brexit then we are going to need Manston and the few alternative sites for freight and passenger traffic. It is a fine irony that on Thursday morning, while officials were clearly preparing to announce the further delay, the RiverOak Strategic Partnership team were on site at Manston meeting with investors intending to plough in excess of £300 million into the development. Those are sums that Thanet has not dreamed of since the Doomsday Book!

As you may imagine, the implied lack of political support has dented investor confidence and we are now having to reassure instead of to forge ahead with the anticipated progress.

What makes this still more unacceptable is that such requests for further information as were made by the Planning Inspectorate received swift and comprehensive responses and that at no time since the report was deposited with the Department have any further requests for information or clarification - which is normal practice - been made. Indeed, as RSP have acquired the site, which might have been one of the stumbling blocks, and as Manston is designated in the Local Plan as an airfield, it is hard to see what possible objections to the proposal could legitimately be made.

RSP hope and intend to reopen Manston as a state-of-the-art net zero-carbon (Helsinki style) freight and passenger facility in the national and local interest and wish to do so as swiftly as possible. An enormous amount of work, faith and millions of pounds worth of investment has already been put into this project and I would hope and expect that the DfT will still give the



green light to the matter in the immediate future so that contracts can be let and the real infrastructure work can begin.

With my personal best wishes

