

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**To:** [Manston Airport](#)  
**Subject:** For the attention of the Manston Airport Case Team  
**Date:** 09 July 2021 02:27:43

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FAO: Manston Airport Case Team

Dear Sirs/Mesdames

My opposition to the arguments outlined in the Secretary of State for Transport's Statement of Matters regarding Riveroak Strategic Partnership's Application for Manston Airport to become a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project are based on the following grounds:

- (i) That the Secretary of State has not demonstrated need
- (ii) That the number of jobs in the proposal are grossly inflated
- (iii) That Riveroak Strategic Partnership is not a fit company to operate an NSIP.

To hear our Thanet MPs, Sir Roger Gale and Craig Mackinlay talk, you would think that local support for the airport is unanimous. This is far from the case. The vast majority of Ramsgate councillors have been elected because of their opposition to its reopening.

'The truth is that Manston has failed over a prolonged period of time to run as a commercially successful airport. Kent County Council gave strong support to various investors but the reality of commercial aviation at Manston Airport led to very significant losses. In fact, in the 16 years since it was taken into private ownership it has incurred losses by those who have tried to operate it in excess of £100 million.' *Manston Airport under private ownership: the story to date and future prospects*. Position Statement, Kent County Council, March 2015, p12.

- (i) That the Secretary of State has not demonstrated need:

To quote Paul Carter, former leader of Kent County Council, 'After 16, 17, 18 years of Manston, everybody has just lost money. So what is the market telling you?' [Ibid, p10.] Obviously, it is telling us that Manston Airport is not needed.

Damon Runyon said, "The race is not always to the swift nor the battle to the strong, but that's the way to bet." There have been five reports by reputable consultancies; all of which agreed with the verdict of the market. Those reports are by Falcon Consultancy (2014), Avia Solutions (2017) York Aviation (2017), Altitude Aviation Advisory (2018) and Alan Stratford and Associates (2021). The Davies Commission (2015) also found no role for Manston. Set against this, is the lone voice of Azimuth Associates, a one-woman band who disagrees with the market and is not exactly a heavy hitter in aviation circles.

Manston Airport will never be viable because it is in the wrong location. Stansted is 38 miles from London: Manston is 80. Much of the Manston road link is only dual carriageway and vulnerable to disruption from cross channel problems. Manston has sea on three sides. It has never been successful with the fresh produce market. It will succeed as a base for Amazon or similar when fish start ordering online.

- (ii) That the number of jobs in the proposal are grossly inflated:

The 2009 Masterplan for Manston Airport was full of similar job promises to the ones currently being touted by Riveroak. The reality was 88 full-time equivalent jobs<sup>[1]</sup>, 21 of which were with the MOD's fire training service which has since moved to Moreton-in-

Marsh.

Between them, Vattenfall, London Array and Siemen's employ far more people than the airport ever has. Viable businesses provide jobs. Non-viable businesses do not and Manston is not, nor ever will be, viable.

(iii) That Riveroak Strategic Partnership is not a fit company to operate an NSIP:

When the Department of Transport awarded a contract to Seaborne Freight, it became the object of ridicule around the world. I fear that with Riveroak, the Department has fallen for yet another bunch of chancers operating in Thanet.

The Secretary of State should be asking himself why Riveroak Strategic Partners (RSP) are so keen to invest the £300 million, they say will be needed to get Manston fully operational again, when it has repeatedly failed as an airport, already lost £100 million of investors' money and so many reputable consultancies consider it is not viable. The RSP website states that their 'funding vehicle' MIO Investments Ltd is registered in the secretive tax haven of Belize. The Secretary of State does not seem to have asked any probing questions about the source of these funds. Surely, he will want to assure himself that they do not include the proceeds of crime.

The only senior member of the Riveroak team with any experience of running an airport is Tony Freudmann. He has run a few airports in his time, but he has never run one profitably. He started as a solicitor but was struck off in 1993 for multiple counts of misappropriation of clients' funds.

In 1994, he joined the property company Wiggins and encouraged the company to go on a buying spree, snapping up largely dormant airports across Europe and in the USA. He was in charge of Manston under Wiggins/Planestation and was let go just before it collapsed with massive debts in 2005. He was involved with EUJet which failed. He then soaked a couple of hundred thousand out of Kent County Council in an abortive attempt to establish a passenger route from Virginia to Manston. He also had a rather disastrous tenure at Lahr Airport in Germany.

Ann Gloag was wise enough to reject the approaches from Tony Freudmann and Riveroak. I can only hope that the Secretary of State does likewise. They do not have the requisite experience to run a viable airport.

Yours faithfully  
Janet Davies



cc. Rt Hon. Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Transport

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[1] Table1, Breakdown of Existing Full Time Direct Employment at KIA, Kent International Airport Master Plan, November 2009, p38.