

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Manston Airport](#)
Subject: Further response re Manston DCO : If the DCO is granted is RSP likely to end up as a massive embarrassment : another example of political incompetence and sleaze in Thanet?
Date: 28 November 2021 08:17:17

Dear Minister

Once again I, together with many other Thanet residents and other interested parties, find myself spending time writing submissions on this proposal – which sadly was not dismissed out of hand when you received the report from the Examining Authority in 2019.

While this matter has been dragging on :

- The previous owners of the site (Stone Hill Park) have walked away from their excellent proposal for the site.
Given the huge success the former owners have made of the nearby Discovery Park – it seems very likely they would have succeeded at Manston
(while some of the key players at RSP have , as you are well aware , a long history of failure at running airports ...)
- Prime agricultural land in Thanet is being built over / designated for housing as the brownfield Manston site cannot be considered for housing until the DCO issue is resolved.
- A surprisingly large amount - £8m – has been paid to RSP for the use of the site as a lorry park to help mitigate the chaos around Brexit .
Given that RSP apparently only paid £16m for the site , it's hard to see the commercial justification for such a munificent payment – and does rather suggest the reason for making that payment needs very serious investigation

On the bright side,

- since the airport closed in 2015 Ramsgate has been left to carry on regenerating itself as a tourist destination and has been moderately successful in doing so .
- The government has recently granted Ramsgate nearly £20 m for regeneration

Most of this progress will be wasted investment if the DCO is granted and Ramsgate is permanently blighted by Manston Airport

Are there any grounds for granting the DCO?

All the evidence – including two reports commissioned by your department- have said there is no case for granting the DCO

The many submissions to the many consultations have repeatedly pointed out the many fallacies in RSP's case – not least RSP's completely unbelievable predictions for the employment that will result from the proposal being implemented.

I sincerely hope that you will follow the weight of evidence and dismiss the application

But if you are wavering towards granting the DCO I urge to consider :

Is RSP likely to end up as a massive embarrassment : another example of political incompetence and sleaze in Thanet?

Politicians in Thanet have a disgraceful reputation for incompetence and political sleaze.

Consider :

Jonathan Aitken – the local MP - jailed for perjury

[REDACTED]

Sandy Ezekiel – a Conservative leader of the local authority - Thanet District Council ('TDC') – was jailed for misconduct in public office

[REDACTED]

Chris Grayling – the hapless UK Transport Minister - became an international laughing stock for granting funding to a Ramsgate based ferry company – a company with no ferries , no experience in running ferries and no money .

Quite rightly "Failing Grayling's" political career was sunk by the many examples of his incompetence – including the Seaborne Ferry fiasco

[REDACTED]

And right now , the huge failings of TDC governance are firmly in the public eye

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Against this background it might be wise to approach anything to do with Thanet with considerable caution...

Have you conducted a risk assessment on RSP ?

- The parent of the various UK operating companies is a murky entity based in a tax haven in the Caribbean .
This entity maintains it has the £300m or so needed to fund the Manston development
- Where is that £300m coming from ?
Is it from a group of UK and other taxpayers who simply think their money needs a holiday in the sunny Caribbean – or is this yet another scheme to launder the ill-gotten gains of gangsters and tax evaders - Vladimir Putin and others of his ilk ?
- The local operation of RSP is headed up by a man who has failed on a number of times to make Manston work as a commercial airport – and many years ago , was struck off as a solicitor for misappropriation of client funds
[REDACTED]
- Sir Roger Gale ,a local MP, has backed RSP to the hilt
Sir Roger is happy to see Ramsgate, a town of 40,000 people (but not in his constituency), blighted by a huge number of low flying aircraft while at the same time

protesting about planes flying over his young grandson's home in Fulham.
Despite RSP being based in a tax haven , Sir Roger is on record as describing himself as
"the MP for RiverOak" [i.e. the MP for RSP]

Have you done your due diligence on RSP ?

By profession I am a Chartered Accountant – and I have nearly 40 years of post-qualification experience .

I have been struck by the way that RSP – in all its various guises- has consistently failed to show us the money. This farce has been going for nearly 7 years.

RSP failed to satisfy the Labour administration of TDC that they had the funding behind them to justify TDC supporting a CPO of the site.

UKIP was then elected into power at TDC on a promise to reopen the airport. Even then TDC had to walk away from RSP because RSP just couldn't satisfy TDC that RSP could come up with the money. And they couldn't have had a more welcoming political leadership to satisfy.

Kent County Council have reviewed RSP and found them lacking

[REDACTED]

So far as I can ascertain the position, RSP have continually failed to name the investors who will be funding them or to say how much money each of those investors will be putting up.

How can this be a credible proposal if RSP can't name their investors and provide firm public commitments from those investors?

Conclusion

Of course all of the above is just circumstantial

It is entirely possible that RSP is the sort of organisation that a reputable MP might want to associate themselves with

And that you as a transport minister might want to put your personal reputation of line for RSP (i.e. not make yourself into the next "Failing Grayling ")

But – if you are tempted to grant the DCO to RSP – please do your due diligence first !

It is essential that you establish there are no money laundering or ethical issues in awarding the DCO to RSP

Thank you

Chris Welch

Fellow of (and Life Member of) Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand , concerned Ramsgate resident and Conservative Party member.