

[REDACTED]

From: Jo Acks <[REDACTED]>

Sent: 25 February 2022 16:04

To: JOHNSON, Boris <[REDACTED]>; SHAPPS, Grant

[REDACTED]; DAVEY, Edward

<[REDACTED]>; BLACKFORD, Ian [REDACTED]

LUCAS, Caroline [REDACTED]

Subject: MANSTON AIRPORT DCO

For the attention of:

Rt Hon Boris Johnson, Prime Minister

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, Secretary of State for Transport

Rt Hon Keir Starmer MP, Leader of the Opposition

Rt Hon Ed Davey MP, Leader of Liberal Democrats

Rt Hon Caroline Lucas MP, Leader of the Green Party

Rt Hon Ian Blackford MP, Leader of the Scottish National Party

Dear all,

POTENTIAL UNDISCLOSED RUSSIAN INVOLVEMENT IN PROPOSED NATIONALLY IMPORTANT
INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT

I write regarding to the Development Consent Order that is being sought by RiverOak Strategic Partners Ltd to secure consent to build a new airport in Manston, East Kent alongside compulsory acquisition powers over part of the land. The old RAF airport was operational until 2014, when it closed due to a lack of viability.

The purpose of this email is to bring to your attention the potential undisclosed Russian involvement in the project, in order that appropriate investigations are made by the relevant government department.

In summary, the approval is sought under the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project regime. After a 6 month process in 2019 culminating in the 4 planning examiners recommending that the Secretary of State refuses to grant consent, the Government strangely saw fit to overturn the recommendation in making a decision to grant the Manston DCO on 9 July 2020.

The October 2019 report from the examining authority, accessible via the following link

([https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR020002/TR020002-005347-](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR020002/TR020002-005347-TR020002%20Final%20Recommendation%20Report%20to%20DfT.pdf)

[TR020002%20Final%20Recommendation%20Report%20to%20DfT.pdf](https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/projects/TR020002/TR020002-005347-TR020002%20Final%20Recommendation%20Report%20to%20DfT.pdf)) strongly concluded that as well as there being no NEED for the development, there were adverse CLIMATE CHANGE impacts as well as other negatives that led them to recommend the refusal.

Despite this, and to all experienced aviation experts shock, the Minister granted it. However, the DCO was subsequently quashed in February 2021 after the High Court ruled the minister gave unintelligible reasons for his decision. On the basis there were no facts or evidence to support

the Minister's decision, he could not justify his decision.. This is the first DCO ever to be quashed. What this meant is that the process has gone back to the decision making stage. The Minister appointed its own aviation expert to advise on the need of the airport, and that independent expert fully agreed with the assessment and recommendations of the independent planning examiners and the other experienced aviation experts (i.e. there was no need for an airport). That should be a slam dunk but strangely the Minister has not yet made the decision.

There is a suspicion that there is some form of political interference going on. Mr Shapps is conflicted on the matter having previously campaigned for the airport's reopening and being a close companion of Roger Gale on the APPG for Aviation, who has long been RiverOak's biggest supporter, referring to himself previously as the MP for RiverOak. RiverOak have also funded the APPG on Aviation securing them access to Westminster.

However, of real concern, particularly at this time given the concerns in Ukraine, is the lack of transparency on the source of the funding behind the project. Despite previous assurances from the Company to disclose their identities, which are hidden through a web of Belize and BVI offshore entities, the Company has refused to divulge their names.

Notwithstanding this, the funders are understood to be Russian non-doms with links to individuals in major energy companies in Russia. This has not been verified independently, however it should be straightforward for government departments to verify. The relevant individuals brought money to the UK using the Business Investment Relief scheme, which required their details to be provided to HMRC. RiverOak provided copies of the correspondence with HMRC as part of its submissions (Appendix 5 Document REP005-011) although the names of the individuals concerned have been redacted at all times in the documentation provide by RiverOak.

When the evidence of experts and planning examiners has seemingly been dismissed, people naturally ask why. And when it relates to decisions on Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects and there is both a lack of transparency about the identity/nationality of the key investors concerns and a absence of any track record of the named directors, concerns are raised. Eyebrows are raised still further when it was disclosed last year that RiverOak received £8.5m from taxpayers for allowing the land to be used for lorry parking for only 6 months, despite the land only costing it slightly more to acquire.

It may be that the Government is fully aware of the investors and that they are beyond repute, but any decision on the DCO must be made with the knowledge of who these individuals are.

Best Regards

Mr J Ackerman

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