



Press Release

29th February 2008

Protesters hit the roof – as BAA Chief Exec quits with £700,000 payoff

As Plane Stupid protestors unfurled their “BAA HQ” banner from the roof of the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday, highlighting the collusion that helped brand the Dft Consultation a sham, BAA Chief Executive Stephen Nelson was reported¹ to be quitting his job with a likely pay-off worth at least £700,000.

Sipson residents were also hitting the roof, furious that the man who wanted to see the obliteration of their entire village² was being given a massive “reward”. It represents £1,000 for each home Nelson was working to destroy. These homes, and others in the neighbouring villages of Harmondsworth and Harlington, have been severely blighted by BAA’s relentless expansion plans over many years. Yet BAA’s blight schemes fail to adequately tackle the increasing problem.³

After years of BAA broken promises, Nelson refused to rule out a fourth runway and seventh terminal⁴, even though he was aware that BAA’s Spanish owner, Ferrovial, faces a debt crisis⁵ and will struggle to finance its extensive refurbishment and expansion plans.

For a man who used to run Guinness⁷, Nelson has found himself working for a company that couldn’t organise a Sangria night in a tapas bar!

Inept Nelson has achieved little in his 18 months as Chief Executive at BAA except to antagonise the airport’s neighbours, workers and passengers. The former Sainsbury’s executive was well past his sell-by date and his swift consignment to the BAA bin was inevitable.

His successor, former Severn Trent Water boss Colin Matthews, who joins BAA on All Fools Day, could well look an idiot when he tries to clean up the company’s grubby image. Terminal 5 teething troubles are waiting for him – as are the automatic exit doors! The best Matthews can hope for is that there will still be some Euros left in the Ferrovial kitty when his time comes for the BAA boot.

NoTRAG’s Geraldine Nicholson said: “Our hugely successful Central London rally this week has boosted enthusiasm for the fight against Heathrow expansion. As the No Third Runway campaign goes from strength to strength, BAA is struggling under a mountain of debt and is desperately dumping executives in a bid to gloss over their problems – which look Terminal!”

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

- (1) The Evening Standard – Wednesday, 27th February 2008
- (2) The Department for Transport Consultation documents confirm that Sipson village, with at least 700 homes, would be totally demolished to provide the land for Heathrow expansion including a third runway and sixth terminal.
- (3) BAA (Heathrow) has introduced a number of schemes in attempts to tackle blight and noise: Property Market Support Bond (July 2005), Home Owner Support Scheme (July 2005), Home Relocation Assistance Scheme (Aug 2005) and Community Building Noise Insulation Scheme (Aug 2005).

However, relentless calls for expansion have blighted many more homes than these schemes indicate. For example, some homes have the proposed M4 spur and airport perimeter road just a few metres from their doors, in addition to the third runway close by, yet aren't covered by any scheme. Meanwhile, prices and saleability are dramatically affected.

Those residents who are eligible for the Property Bond may want to move now but feel unable to obtain an acceptable price. They cannot rent out their property and buy elsewhere until the situation improves because this completely disqualifies them from the bond scheme should a runway go ahead.

Should BAA drop its runway proposals, or the government accept that it should not be built, there is no scheme to compensate homeowners for the blight that has already been inflicted and will take decades to overcome.

- (4) Stephen Nelson's response to questions from the London Assembly's Environment Committee, 22nd January 2008.
http://www.london.gov.uk/view_press_release_a.jsp?releaseid=15378
- (5) Full-year results, announced 26th February 2008, show that Ferrovial's debt-servicing charge rocketed to €1.9bn (£1.4bn) last year from €1.23bn, mainly due to its 61pc interest in the company that owns seven UK airports, including Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted.
- (7) Managing Director, Guinness Great Britain 1990-2000

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