

Sample Letter: to Mr Greg Clark MP (Tunbridge Wells)

Dear Mr Clark - Click to download the letter, here it is in full: (Your address)

Mr Greg Clark MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

Dear Mr Greg Clark,

I live in _____, which is under a flightpath for Gatwick arrivals. I am writing to express concern at the way Gatwick Airport is currently operating without due regard for the noise and air pollution caused to residents and local businesses with particular respect to:

- Ongoing increase of flights both during the day and especially at night
- Imposed route changes with aeroplane 'Superhighway' and arrival frequency of up to one plane every minute.
- A Second Runway that could result in a further doubling and possible tripling of plane flights and additional Superhighways.

From November, according to Gatwick's latest 'Consultation', your constituency will have all of Gatwick's arriving planes concentrated over it on one or more 'Superhighways.' My key concern is that Gatwick is almost entirely self-regulated and under-policed.

Residents under plane arrivals have no rights. Our local and regional councils, and even the UK Government and the European Union, have no meaningful policies or regulatory power to deal with the effects of unfettered airport expansion and the changes continually imposed by aviation companies without democratic oversight. This is worrying because Gatwick Airport Ltd is a private company with no ethical remit. Like other aviation companies and airlines, they operate globally to pursue profits and maximise dividends to shareholders.

There is a significant Public Health issue posed by increased flights, which according the World Health Organisation can lead to a 'considerable burden of disease'. This is both in terms of air quality and also with regard to noise pollution, particularly from night flights. Gatwick's planes come over Tunbridge Wells at unpredictable frequency, different heights, and different speeds day and night, many flown by pilots who have not been trained in noise mitigation procedures. There are no minimum heights for arrivals and noise levels go unreported and largely ignored, as do complaints. GATCOM, the public liaison committee that Gatwick is obliged to have, is dominated by people with business interests associated with Gatwick, and it is funded by Gatwick. Gatwick runs its 'Public Consultations' such as the recent second runway event days simply as PR exercises. For example, the recent events apparently gave the public a choice between runway options although the wide option runway **had already been chosen and submitted to the Airport's Commission.** What's more, Gatwick submitted a larger proposal than that detailed during the runway 'Consultation' to the Airport's Commission last week, and prior to the end of the consultation process. Gatwick are acting duplicitously on this matter.

Gatwick expresses the need to actively mitigate and reduce the environmental impacts of flights but in reality does as little as possible to help protect residents. For instance, Gatwick have taken no steps to encourage

Easyjet to retrofit the design fix on their Easyjet Airbus 319/320 aeroplanes to prevent the high pitched 'jet whine' that many residents find extremely annoying. And they have just signed a flights deal that will significantly increase the number of Easyjet flights.

The air pollution and noise from planes are known to have major impacts on the health of residents both in mental and physical terms. Medical research, for example the work undertaken by the World Health Organisation, shows that allowing night flights in particular has too great an impact on health for them to be economically viable. Presumably, this is why there is a night flights ban at Heathrow.

However, there is no such ban at Gatwick Airport. Gatwick's business plan shows that they intend to increase night flights along with day flights. Route changes Gatwick made (without public consultation) in 1999 to reduce night flights over East Grinstead and in turn to enable a higher frequency of flights to line up in approaching the airport, shifted flights further east onto Tunbridge Wells and its surrounding environs. Gatwick is now effectively operating a flight exclusion zone for the town of East Grinstead whereas there is no exclusion zone for Tunbridge Wells, despite the fact my area is much more highly populated.

We currently get around ten thousand night flights per year. Tunbridge Wells now has more night flights concentrated over it than any other major town in the country. Please find night flight print outs attached – and these are all 'off peak'. In the summer peak time when people often sleep with their windows open, we are already getting up to 50 planes per night on average, and as shown by readings at the temporary monitor near Bidborough each one is commonly in excess of 60dB. I am sure you can appreciate that 60dB is more than enough to disrupt sleep patterns. A decent night's sleep is essential for health and wellbeing, especially for children, and normal sleep has been shown to be disturbed by plane noise as low as 35dB.

To compound this unfair situation the responsibility for reporting noise disruption is placed on residents to report plane 'incidences'. Lack of complaint is taken as evidence of acceptance. Yet scientific evidence has shown that while sleep can be severely disrupted by planes, most people usually do not fully wake up. Therefore how on earth can people reasonably be expected to complain about disrupted sleep when they are by definition unaware of it i.e. in a state of unconsciousness?

I am writing to ask that you take immediate steps to correct this unbalanced and unreasonable bias in favour of aviation companies. I am grateful for your work in the past on this issue, for instance, chairing the local Public Meeting about aviation last year in Langton Green. However, your position on this issue has not been entirely visible to date, and I want you to better represent my interests by being more proactive in the aviation debate on behalf of your constituents from now on. At the very least, I ask that you call for an immediate ban and moratorium on night flights at Gatwick Airport given the significant public health costs of such flights, as has been done in many other countries including Germany.

May I also take this opportunity to point out that allowing the aviation industry unfettered growth restricts business opportunities for other industries in your constituency such as Sports, Leisure and also Tourism. The predicted effect of increased and potentially more concentrated flightpaths on wildlife and in places like Penshurst and Chiddingstone Castle as well as on the Ashdown Forest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a case in point.

Yours truly,