



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Houses of Parliament
London

Miss R James

Lightwater
Surrey

BY EMAIL

15 March 2019

Dear Mr Gove

I am writing to register, in the strongest possible terms, my dissatisfaction with your manner at what can only be described as a disastrous meeting held with you at your Windlesham office on February 22, 2019.

Many of your constituents, myself and Rob being just two, have spent hundreds of unpaid hours of work attending Heathrow meetings to scrutinise and hold Heathrow to account for the increase in aircraft noise since the trials of 2014. It has long been an established fact by way of analysis of Heathrow's own data, that flights are now lower, fly in a more concentrated pattern and there are more of them. These facts were agreed in joint written statements between Heathrow and community groups (sent to your office and also available in the public domain). Now, yet further far reaching changes are being proposed by Heathrow demanding even greater scrutiny.

AN3V was invited to attend a meeting with you, and in the absence of any agenda prepared by your office, we began by seeking clarification of your understanding of both the impending implications of Independent Parallel Approaches (IPA) and Precision based navigation (PBN) given that Heathrow has been clear that flights in this area could be as low as 2000', less than half the height of current noisiest flight. In terms of PBN, there is not a single instance worldwide where its introduction has been successful.

In addition, we sought clarification on measures you were either taking or seeking to protect your constituents from yet more noise, which we again considered a fair starting point as you have publically stated *'I am determined to secure measures that will protect my constituents from any possible additional noise and pollution from a third runway at Heathrow'*. We are surely right to be raising concerns when Heathrow, despite intense pressure from communities over existing noise levels since 2014, now openly proposes action which will undoubtedly significantly increase noise.

Heathrow is disingenuous by focusing on the temporary nature of these changes, When its expansion bid fails as it has in the past, what then of these 'temporary' changes? Changes simply to gain efficiencies for the industry at the expense of overflown communities. Whilst capacity is full and expansion vital according to the industry, miraculously a further 25,000 planes can be accommodated without a third runway. On inspection, this can only be accommodated by aircraft more than 12 miles from the runway operating as low as 2000ft! What consequences does Government envisage a further 10 fold increase of a staggering 250,000 aircraft will have? These are the questions to which communities seek answers.



I consider our approach to the meeting was reasonable given the difficult question of expansion and commercial interest versus health and wellbeing of citizens. No one connected to AN3V is opposed to aviation or indeed, anti Heathrow, however as stated, we cannot simply stand by and accept continued expansion at any price.

Rather than engage in meaningful discussion, you instead chose to trot out the hackneyed data on complaints. To what purpose Mr Gove? AN3V has never disputed that complaint levels are low or questioned Heathrow's figures. AN3V decided to determine, by means of a survey sent to AN3V supporters, whether residents were still troubled by aircraft noise, at what times of the day and how often they submitted complaints. In the first survey, a staggering 95% of respondents who said they continue to be disturbed by aircraft noise stated they never complained and of the many reasons given, a constant was that it was considered to be a waste of time, that it would make no difference. AN3V is not in the habit of campaigning for the sake of it, so to ensure it was accurately reflecting concerns, a second survey was repeated more than 18 months after the first with almost identical results, ie the majority of people disturbed cannot be bothered to complain.

In the face of this research data and feedback provided by your own constituents, rather than engage and discuss the impact of aviation noise in your constituency which is obviously being severely under-reported, you instead chose to cite Heathrow's numbers as being 'fact' but categorically stated that AN3V's data was not fact. You suggested the findings should have been submitted to you. They were. Neither you nor local councillors had the courtesy to either acknowledge or comment on the report. It seems to me, there is a disturbing propensity to try to undermine any of AN3V's findings.

The Briar meeting later that day perfectly illustrated the level of concern for aviation matters (both current and future) amongst residents, with a small hall filled to bursting point and many more turned away unable to gain access. Conversely, the choice of such a small venue perhaps perfectly illustrates your underestimation of the depth of concern over aviation issues within the local communities.

You went on to challenge our concerns regarding early morning aircraft noise from 04:30 stating that Heathrow had confirmed no flights before 06:00am. This reveals a lack of understanding on the differences between arrivals and departures, yet once again, you would not accept our word that our facts and experience were correct. Flights cannot depart before 06:00am but do arrive from as early as 04:30, a fact which Heathrow confirmed as factual at the Briar Centre meeting later that day. What dismays me is your preparedness to accept Heathrow statements as fact, but AN3V it seems is to be consistently questioned and challenged. Should it not be of great concern for instance that Heathrow can attend the Briar meeting unable to provide even basic noise and decibel data in response to the inevitable questions as was the case, whilst still attempting to convince the room communities would not be worse off? You have requested the information but how will you convey the response to those in attendance?

You then proceeded to deliver your view on why the campaign would fail and unjustly painted a picture of AN3V campaign group as a Heathrow bashing group which refuses to accept a word the industry utters. As someone who, almost 5 years on, asks a basic question such as how many constituents support AN3V, it is doubtful you are sufficiently au fait with either the campaign or its aims to determine its success or failure.



The truth of the matter is in 4 years of supposed community engagement, with Heathrow, not a single thing has changed and the industry simply pays lip service to both communities and Government. Call it a lie, disingenuous or misleading, but Heathrow has a legacy of such practise and that is most definitely a fact. Even The Secretary of State for Transport now finds himself in a position where the alternative is that either he was misled by Heathrow, or he attempted to mislead. A choice of word which is hardly coincidence in my opinion but nevertheless, AN3V and the many other campaign groups now representing communities across the South East are rightly scrutinising the aviation industry and again I would remind you of the levels of time and commitment freely given by many of your constituents in an attempt to hold Heathrow to account. That you should deride, rather than assist their efforts is simply a disgrace.

Perhaps if Government understood and were in control of a well regulated aviation industry, where the health and well being of communities was not continually and increasingly traded in exchange for unsustainable aviation operations and profits, the need for AN3V and many other groups would not exist.

The failure on your part to accept the work of AN3V as a positive and potentially useful resource both to yourself and local council was fundamental to any successful meeting outcome. To therefore be put in a position of having to defend AN3V supporters to the very person elected to represent constituents and whose assistance was being sought was offensive and it was for that reason that I ended the meeting.

Not content it seems to denigrate the efforts of AN3V, you then had the simply breathtaking audacity to state you would be prepared to 'provide guidance on how to win a successful campaign' if needed. Might I suggest that you conserve your campaigning guile for future re-election campaigns which will no doubt be extremely challenging.

It may be acceptable in the rarefied atmosphere of the Commons to speak to people in such a manner, however, in the real world it is rightly considered patronising, arrogant and rude. More importantly, it was unjust.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'R James'.

R James
Aircraft Noise 3 Villages Campaign