

24 August 2007

Inquiry into BAA

I wish to add my voice to the many who have demanded the break-up of BAA in the interests of airline passengers.

I fly frequently, and am always disappointed when I return to Heathrow or Gatwick – particularly when I have flown from a well-run airport such as Zurich or Geneva.

The terminals at Heathrow are always crowded, poorly maintained and frequently dirty. There are always walkways or elevators out of action, security access points are inadequately manned, with aggressive, poorly-trained staff. Immigration points are poorly set up (I always think of the Chicago cattle market when I see the winding approaches), and the scanning equipment works badly. Any incoming tourists must gain an appalling impression of the UK.

Baggage handling is worse – baggage is delayed, badly-treated, spewed out into crowded, badly serviced halls. BAA has exploited its position to prioritise the profits from shops over the convenience and comfort of passengers.

Ferrovial has purchased BAA at a substantial mark-up to its market value, and will now be seeking to trim costs, reduce investment, and increase profits. All of these will be at the expense of the long-suffering passengers.

BAA has exploited its monopoly for far too long – it should be forced to hand over Heathrow & Gatwick (and possibly Edinburgh) to another, more efficient operator.

Regards,

Andrew Jay