

28 May 2007

I am a frequent flyer on British Airways and Virgin Atlantic and also a frequent user of Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. In connection with your inquiry I write to represent as follows.

The monopoly of BAA on these airports is severely detrimental to competition and good customer service. Both Heathrow and Gatwick are now, in my view, some of the worst international airports that I travel to (and I travel at least 2-3 times each month on business). They are expensive, poorly maintained and just plain inefficient. I believe that much of this stems from the fact that BAA pays far more attention to the shopping facilities at these airports than to their passenger amenities. There is a fundamental conflict of interest on the part of BAA which forces them to serve their retail establishments rather than customers. Perversely, BAA makes more money (as do their retailers at these airports) if passengers are delayed going through (arriving and departing) at these airports.

Both these airports are filthy (departure and arrival areas, toilets), poorly maintained and inadequately staffed. Despite the one handbag security regulations (which are enforced nowhere else) security times are some of the longest. Upon arrival at these airports there is usually no gate, no bus, no air bridge, etc which means even on flights which reach on time passengers are delayed exiting. Baggage belt breakdowns are commonplace.

BAA must be made to clearly separate their interests of developing retail operations at airports, from their fundamental duty to service air travellers. Their monopoly must also be removed so that proper competition at UK airports is established.

Thank you,

Vinit Joshi