

7.1.08

I am a worker at Heathrow Airport and have come to the point of being so fed up with the way not just airport staff are being treated by this company but the service they give to passengers and airlines.

I want to start by saying what inspired me to write this letter. It was yet another day and without warning again BAA had closed a control post I can only assume due to lack of staff. This is very annoying to everyone because the route leading up to my local control post is concealed and you have no idea the control post is shut until you are right by the door having walked the three minute fast pace to get there and finding you have to walk three minutes back wasting about six minutes of your time if you're a fast walker. So once again I found myself at another control post where once again I was left outside on a raining day in a huge queue because of the other control post being closed and also because this was also a vehicle gate where Airline crew and cleaning vehicles, etc come into the airport. So they make an already busy control post even busier by shutting other control posts. As normal everyone outside were complaining from all various companies on the airport, from Asig, Air Canada, etc. When I did manage to finally get to the front of the queue on this day I heard the voice of a lady complain that her phone had been damaged by the heavy hands of a security man. I managed to get inside the door enough to see it was an Indian lady very upset. As soon as she had said what she did the BAA security guard immediately jumped out of his seat and started shouting at her and acted in a conduct unfitting of that of a security officer. The lady stunned immediately decided to drop the incident and attempted to leave but before she could do so the security guard decided he wanted to get revenge on her for daring to speak out. He said in such a rude manner "give me your pass, I'm taking that. The lady was shocked as was everyone in the queue who witnessed this. The rest of the BAA staff naturally stuck together all too cowardly to question his right to do this. This man was obviously the bully of the group which many airport workers have dubbed BAA staff "mini Hitlers". I was speaking to a few other people in the queue to what we had just witness, about the appalling queues we are subjected to everyday coming into work and the incident we had all just witnessed. One person said if we complain we end up like that poor lady and thrown off the airport which I know from past experience and from what I had just seen is completely true.

A lot of the security staff truly believe they are the law and control everyone who is unfortunate enough to work air side in a BAA run airport... As my bag went through the x-ray and I collected it at the other end I saw the poor lady being held by this bully of a security officer while he took down her information on her pass. As I looked at this I thought to myself, What gives him the right to do this just because she made an accusation against him, what has she actually done wrong apart from accusing him of damage to her phone that justifies him taking her pass. It was for nothing more than spite. I don't know whether or not this security officer did or did not damage her phone but the heavy handed approach and bullying tactics he used were completely unacceptable. He certainly had no right to take her i.d. This should have been referred to a complaints procedure. This was a clear misuse and abuse of his powers.

This is just one example of many and the way airport staff are treated by BAA and its staff is disgraceful, I have to allow thirty minutes coming to work now just to get through the security posts. Thousands of workers are arriving late to work everyday

which could in some cases cause aircraft delays depending on the persons job. It also always seems to be that they want to search everything in your bag the day you are late for work. On many occasions they take everything out of your bag and just walk off without putting anything back or saying you can go leaving you there with your personal items spread across a table.

When walking into a control post you do manage to find open in peak or non peak times, the staff often do not even check the image on the x-ray screen because they are too busy moaning to each other about wages, overtime pay, or their supervisors and colleagues and how they should not have got a promotion or how lazy and stupid they are.

I don't need to tell you that BAA charge a small fortune to airlines and passengers and the companies. What is not so well known is the actual poor state of the services being offered. The stands are often too small for the aircraft and every stand on the airport is covered in equipment which is not bothered to be removed by BAA for being illegally parked. Even the legally parked equipment on the stands is in the way because BAA in their wisdom decided to put parking bays on the head of the stands making it very difficult for cargo lorries and other trucks to access the planes. It also doesn't help when stands only have a fuel pit on one side of the stand meaning fuellers also have to share that side of the stand with caterers, baggage men, cargo lorries to name a few. The stands are in poor condition with slippery metal sheets laid on some stands to cover up concrete damage rather than just repair the concrete T5 already has stand closures due to damaged stands and it's not even officially open yet. Most stands do not have a full set of cones to cone the aircraft for protection and BAA will not provide chocks for their stands and instead let the airlines or handlers take responsibility for purchasing them. Some stands at the back of the cul-de-sacs have the blast barrier nearly right by the stand and so to push back the huge aircraft they put on them stands their main gear has to be put under so much pressure to allow the plane to be pushed back and because the plane has to be turned so sharply by the push back driver, at this point if the plane was to break free from the tractor it would almost certainly hit the barrier behind and the terminal pier. The rates BAA charge these companies for operating inside the airport seems to be pretty much depending on how much profit BAA wants to make. Just recently my company has had their rates go up by such a huge amount it has doubled or nearly doubled, I do not know the exact amount. That's without the airport licence tax for vehicles and all the other fees they dump on top of that.

There was also recently the scare at Glasgow airport which found doctors were allowed to work here without the correct clearance. At Heathrow The English speaking many non speaking Polish, Asian, Portuguese to name a few ethnic backgrounds that work at the airport also have no security checks except for one for the time they have been in this country, ie anything from a matter of days or weeks since they entered the country and looked for airport employment. That's a lot more alarming a security issue than doctors bypassing a criminal record check. It is a waste of time and money bothering with a criminal records check if their UK history only dates back a month. The other issue is the amount of accidents these drivers are causing because they should not be driving. Many are still using their foreign driver's licences even though they have been driving here for over a year and need to sit a UK driving test. There have been so many accidents at the airport in recent months two being nearly fatal.

There are also now twelve handling companies that I can think of at Heathrow airport which as was expressed by the unions far too many as they all compete with each other for aircraft contracts each trying to give a service cheaper than the other.

This endangers lives and makes the work more unbearable for the baggage handlers who constantly see their wage for the job decrease with every new arrival into the company, even the contracts of three years ago for a baggage handler has dramatically decreased so as companies such as Avianca can give a cheaper service. When I first started it was on the condition that I first passed a strict English and Maths test and driving test. This has all now been bypassed to allow cheaper EU workers to join. This has seriously jeopardised safety at the airport. Some of the workers cannot even speak or read the most basic of English which explains why so many bags are now being missed place, there is also a lack of moral at the airport because of the constant wage decrease by companies bent on make more profit. BAA should enforce these test and should had limited the amount of handling companies operating at Heathrow years ago to no more than four as what was recommended. The reason they did not and will not because it is all more money for them which is what they care about.

One other thing to note is the unfair competition and I am not just speaking about the fact BAA owns, Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted. I am talking about British Airways. Every time a new terminal opens they seem to get it. They had T4 when it opened, now they have wrecked that they are moving on to T5. This is hardly fair to other airlines, T5 should have been shared out to all airlines not just one. T5 is also right by the runways giving BA fast access to them where as other airlines may have to wait a long time before getting to a runway.

One more thing is to be said about BA, BA used to own a lot of what is now run by BAA but one thing BA kept was stand allocations meaning they control what aircraft go onto what stand when they land. So it is no surprise that BA flights are never waiting on the taxi ways waiting for their stand to be clear because their stands they are allocated are only the clear ones and other companies such as Sri Lankan can be waiting anything up to forty minutes to dock on the stand BA have so kindly allocated them. This allocating and BA giving themselves priority needs to be taken away from BA. The relationship between BA and BAA also needs to come to an end, i.e BA aircraft always getting push back clearance before other airlines and BA always leaving their equipment illegally parked and all over stands blocking incoming aircraft and never having their equipment towed away by BAA or being punished for it.

BAA airports are poorly run and I never thought I would say it but Heathrow has got a lot worst since they were taken over.

Heathrow is just too important for a company such as BAA to run because all they care about is profit and not service.

If you ask the people who work at Heathrow and the companies many would say that Heathrow should be taken away from BAA and run by the government, it needs to be public and at least it will have the money invested into it and services for the public will be improved without the fear of a company who just cares about their profits and not their services.

Sincerely

Airport Staff.