

10 August 2007

Dear Sirs,

Comments on BAA

I have just become aware of the current enquiry regarding BAA airports and would like to make the following comments.

I am a frequent flyer, both on business and pleasure and my travel takes me to many developed countries in Asia, Europe, North America and Australia.

Whenever possible, I avoid Heathrow Airport, preferring to use any of the other hub airports such as Schiphol, Amsterdam. On the occasions when I am forced to use Heathrow, I am disgusted and disappointed. My last visit to Heathrow was when returning from Australia and Singapore and transferring to a flight to Newcastle. After experiencing efficiency, customer service, cleanliness, choice, good seating and good information everywhere else on my trip, I found Heathrow to be none of those things and I felt ashamed that this airport is the first view that many people get of my country.

If it had been clean, then some of the other deficiencies may have seemed less horrific. The Terminal 1 gate area was just awful. Everything from carpets to ceiling was filthy. The windows were covered with grime and when you could see out, there were piles of litter outside, accumulating in a services area.

In my business, I have to compete with many other international suppliers and frankly, the view that customers get of the UK when visiting via Heathrow has an impact on my business.

The volume of traffic can never be an excuse, as each traveller makes a major financial contribution and should receive value for that money. Many other organisations cope much better with travelling customers. The docklands light railway is a case in point.

The increased density of retail areas denigrates the travelling public and reduces us to mere pawns in the retail game.

Until BAA or any other curator of our travel hubs demonstrates their commitment to providing the minimum level of acceptable customer service, in cleanliness, toilets, seating, choice of food and drink, and information, then I would contend that they have no right to operate the concessions with all of the profits that are available to them thereby.

As a supply chain consultant, I know that this is a complex area, but BAA are clearly failing in their basic obligations at Heathrow and urgent remedial action should be taken to address this, well before they are allowed to replicate the problems in Terminal 5.

In the meantime, I will continue to conduct my business at the better provincial airports or at Schiphol and I will certainly advise my clients and colleagues to avoid Heathrow whenever possible.

John Allen