

Flying high and intelligently to cut noise

I am urging the government and aviation industry to use modern technology to save fuel, cut costs, reduce noise and improve the passenger experience.

The central point of the idea is to eliminate the stacks around busy airports, especially Heathrow near my constituency.

Today when the airport gets busy planes are asked to circulate above the London area, flying around in circles, gradually dropping height until a runway is available. This increases the amount of noise on the ground substantially, increases the time when an accident or failure to the plane risks damage and death on the ground below in heavily developed and congested areas, and subjects passengers to variable delays they were not expecting.

The way to eliminate the stack is to use modern GPS, communications to inbound aircraft and computer runway planning to ensure one plane at a time arrives ready to land without joining a stack. Incoming planes can be given single accurate timings to land, and vary their speed at height over the Atlantic or the continent accordingly so they arrive on time. Sometimes long haul flights will be told to slowdown. They can give their passengers a precise flight landing time, and can save fuel as they make slower progress to the airport. For shorter haul this might be done by keeping the plane on the ground at departure until its flight time coincides with runway availability, or might entail letting it take off with a lower average speed to destination.

Where an unforeseen event requires a landing by a plane without an approved slot this should usually be accommodated at a less busy airport. Obviously life threatening disasters would lead to an override of the system if it is thought using a busy runway could offer the chance of saving lives.

Removing the stack means

Greater certainty about arrival times for passengers

Less fuel use for the planes that are asked to fly slower rather than stacking

Less risk to the populations around busy airports

Less noise from the skies

I am told work is underway to give pilots more warning of landing slots and to slow planes that otherwise would have to join a stack. Lets hope they speed this work up.

Local schools do well in Sunday Times performance table

Reading Grammar was seventh placed school nationwide for exam performance in the latest tables, with sister grammar school Kendrick in 26th place.

Holt was our best performing comprehensive, ranked in 176th place, followed by Maiden Erlegh at 337.

Congratulations to all the teachers and pupils for doing well academically

Meeting with Aviation Minister

I met Baroness Sugg, the Aviation Minister today.

I complained again about the narrowing of the Compton Gate airspace control without consultation by NATs in 2014, which has concentrated more noise over Wokingham during easterly operations. I asked for change to this arrangement. The Minister said this was not going to happen before a general review of the airspace arrangements for the enlarged Heathrow envisaged in plans for a new runway. I made early representations on this matter for this future review. I said they needed to consider both better dispersion and respite periods where they currently concentrate traffic.

I also asked for more to be done to mitigate noise of flights we are currently experiencing. The agenda includes managing out old and noisy aircraft, ensuring planes fly high enough to minimise noise, avoiding sharp turns, early deployment of undercarriage and other bad flying habits which add to noise.

I have been promised a letter setting out what more the government is and can do to alleviate the noise problem.

How to negotiate with the EU

As someone who negotiated at 21 Councils of Ministers in the EU, I learned that a country needs to be firm and clear about its intentions, and must

decline to accept an unhappy compromise.

As we have seen from the former senior civil servants in the Lords, they have a very different approach. Their view is that because the EU is larger than the UK we just have to ask them what they intend to do and then claim it as our own. I fully accept that Prime Ministers and Ministers are responsible for the way the UK sought to renegotiate its relationship under David Cameron, and again they are responsible under Mrs May and Mr Davis for the current negotiations. It does however look as if the general thrust of civil service advice now as then has similarities to the attitudes the former senior officials express in the House of Lords. Now they are legislators they have to accept that their views will be subject to refutation and rejection by those who disagree.

I have never understood why so many senior officials think we need to give in each time to the EU. At every Council I attended there was remorseless pressure to reach an agreement about some new law – always an extension of EU power – when there was no need for a new law and when many interested parties were against it or wanted it changed or watered down. We can see the dangers of the approach in the failed renegotiation conducted by David Cameron. Let us adopt the convention that the PM himself chose this route. We do not need to claim he simply followed civil service advice. What is clear is no-one senior in the civil service warned him that his negotiating stance would not work, or sought to get him to ask for more or to dig in more. If they had I am sure leaks would have told us about it. What he did he did with civil service agreement.

So what did he do wrong? He asked for too little and settled for even less. The method appeared to be to tour the main capitals of the EU and ask what they might offer us. The answer was a uniform not much. He then asked for not much, and was promptly told that was too much! Legitimate requests to control numbers of migrants and to decide who was entitled to UK benefits were turned down. He thought Germany would help him, but Germany saw little need to and felt the UK with an opt out from the Euro and Schengen already had enough special treatment. As a result he was greeted with universal disapproval by the Brexit majority in the country who decided the deal was simply not good enough.

It is very important that Ministers and the civil service understand why this went wrong and do not do the same again if they want a sensible deal from the EU. We have been told the EU wants money we do not owe them, wants us to continue to obey laws we might wish to amend, and thinks we should “compromise” over freedom of movement. Many Brexit voters see no need to do any of those things. If the EU stays so unhelpful and offers nothing decent for the future relationship the government will find many voters think No Deal preferable to the deal the EU has in mind. Are there any voices in the civil service close to the PM telling her that I wonder?

Wokingham Spring Fair

I went to the opening and visited many of the stalls at the Fair yesterday.

I would like to thank all the voluntary associations, companies and charities who supported the event.

Two asked me to put out messages on this website.

Next Step Fostering said they need more volunteers to foster children. They can be contacted on 0845 6038354 or info@nextstepfostering.org

Wokingham Borough Council's Sports and Leisure department reminded me that they have a full programme of activities for children during the summer holidays. These can be viewed on www.wokingham.gov.uk/activekids