



Ref. A084/3031

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: Parliamentary Affairs: Stansted/Heathrow Terminal 5
Public Inquiries

BACKGROUND

The Inspector's report on the concurrent public inquiries into the Stansted/Heathrow Terminal 5 planning application is finally expected later this month. Such reports are normally published only when the decision is announced and it was agreed in March 1980 that this should apply in this case.

2. There has been considerable pressure both inside and outside Parliament for the report to be published and for Parliament to discuss it before decisions are taken. (More than 80 Conservative MPs have signed an Early Day Motion opposing the development of Stansted.) Furthermore the Attorney General has advised that the Inspector's report will have to be disclosed in connection with the publication of British Airways' (BA's) prospectus, since information in it will materially affect the company's prospects. It is most unlikely that a decision can be taken on the report before next February, when BA's prospectus is published.

3. The Secretary of State for Transport now proposes (his FLAG A → minute to you of 13 November) that the earlier decision on publication should be reversed. A Written Answer before the Second Reading debate on the Civil Aviation Bill on 19 November would announce the intention to publish the Inspector's report when it is received. This should prevent the Second Reading debate being used as a vehicle for discussion on Stansted and Heathrow. Parliament would be given an opportunity to debate the report at some time in the future; the form and timing of this debate can be decided later. The Lord Privy Seal, the Minister for Housing and Construction and the Deputy Chief Whip support this line.



MAIN ISSUES

4. This is not the time to discuss any substantive issues on Stansted or Heathrow. The issues before Ministers at this stage relate only to publication of the report:

- (a) Timing. Is it necessary to announce a decision on publication before Second Reading of the Civil Aviation Bill? If not, might it be better to wait and see what the report says, and to be sure that a decision cannot be made before the BA flotation?
- (b) Publication before the Government has made its decision will create a precedent. Are there implications for other inquiries eg Sizewell?

HANDLING

5. Before asking the Secretary of State for Transport to open the discussion, you may wish to point out that this is not the time for a discussion of the substantive issues on Stansted/Heathrow. Only decisions on publication of the Inspector's report need to be taken now. The Secretary of State for Energy will have views on the impact on the Sizewell Inquiry; the Secretary of State for the Environment may also wish to speak on the general issue. The Lord Privy Seal and the Deputy Chief Whip will be able to explain the House of Commons views. The Lord President may wish to comment on possible difficulties in the House of Lords.

CONCLUSIONS

6. You will wish Cabinet to reach conclusions on:

- (a) Whether the Inspector's report on Stansted/Heathrow Terminal 5 public inquiries should be published as soon as it is received.

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(b) If so, whether this should be announced in advance of the Second Reading of the Civil Aviation Bill.

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Approved by
ROBERT ARMSTRONG
and signed in his absence.

14 November 1984

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