



n.b. P.M.

BHP

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cc P/M

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE

WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

19 October 1990

*Dear Lord***WORKING GROUP ON RUNWAY CAPACITY TO SERVE THE SOUTH EAST**

I have been following colleagues' comments on the draft Terms of Reference for the working group you are setting up, which you circulated with your letter to Chris Patten of 10 August. *Acc*

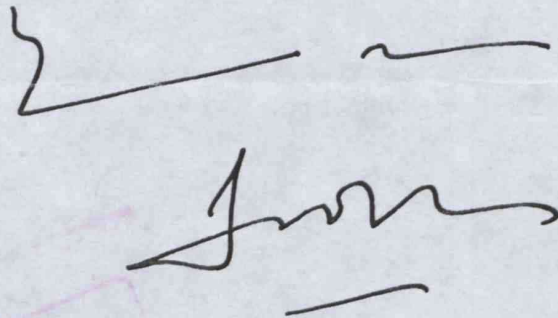
As you know, I share with Tim Renton a major concern about re-opening the issue of a second runway at Gatwick. And I note that Chris Patten, in his letter to you of 16 July, emphasised the risks we would run if we were seen to be countenancing the re-opening of the very specific assurances we gave in the 1985 White Paper.

It is obviously necessary that the working group should be able to look at the arguments which have led the CAA to come up with the idea of a further runway at Gatwick, as Chris Patten and Peter Lilley have noted. But I must take issue with Peter's view that competition policy arguments could point towards overturning the decisions we took in 1985 as regards Gatwick. In terms of the political pressure we would face if we were to reopen the question of a second runway at Gatwick, it matters not one jot whether we are talking about a runway to the north or the south of the present one. To try to get out of our 1985 undertakings on that basis would add ridicule to controversy.

Accordingly I hope that in what you and colleagues say publicly about the work of the working group, it can be made clear that while they are obviously looking at the CAA's entire report including the option affecting Gatwick, they are doing so in the light of the decisions the Government took in 1985 and our view that the arguments then advanced remain compelling today. We agreed that Tim Renton and I should use this line in public statements in July, and I should not want us to say anything publicly which might imply that we were departing from it.

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I am copying this letter to the Prime Minister and Cabinet colleagues, and to Tim Renton and Bertie Denham, and to Sir Robin Butler.



A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Geoffrey Howe', with a horizontal line underneath.

GEOFFREY HOWE

The Rt Hon Cecil Parkinson MP

Aerospace : Power P 16.

