



North

Yorkshire County Council

Chief Executive's Group

Your Reference:

My Reference: JM/BAS/W33

County Hall
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AD

14 August, 2007

Mr P Freeman
Competition Commission
BAA London Airports Inquiry
Victoria House
Southampton Row
LONDON WC18 4AD

Dear Mr Freeman

Leeds Bradford – London Heathrow Service

I am writing to share my concerns about the impact that the review of charges at London Heathrow could have on the continuation of the BMI service between Heathrow and Leeds/Bradford Airport.

Leeds/Bradford is a vital gateway to the Leeds City Region and has a significant impact not only on business and leisure tourism but also on inward investment to the region. Research has shown that large sections of the North Yorkshire Economy are driven by the Leeds City Region. The loss of the BMI Heathrow link will make this Region less accessible for businesses in western London and along the M4 corridor. Also, the loss of a seamless connection to the 241 international destinations served by Heathrow will make North Yorkshire less accessible to the world wide tourist and business traveller. In today's competitive global economy a small barrier to accessibility can have an enormous negative impact on business development and on long term business confidence and inward investment.

The District of Harrogate will be particularly badly affected as the year round business tourism generated by the Harrogate International Centre underpins the area's tourist economy and provides the critical mass without which the rural summer visitor economy would have limited viability. The recent IFA awards ceremony, the 'Bollywood Oscars', has shown us that there is interest in the region from the Indian sub-continent and the BMI Heathrow link is essential if opportunities offered by this and other emerging economies are to be exploited by our businesses and tourist economy.

My understanding is that charges at Heathrow are universal and do not take account of their varying impact on long haul and short haul ticket prices. I should like you to consider taking account of the different economies of international and domestic flights when setting charges for the future. Specifically, in view of the significance of the London Heathrow service to the Leeds City Region, I should like you to consider the impact of the proposed increases in charges on the BMI Leeds/Bradford service and introduce some flexibility into the charging system which takes account of regional economic impact.

If the Heathrow Leeds/Bradford service is reduced or withdrawn some business will be lost to North Yorkshire entirely. Alternatively, travellers to and from international destinations may elect to fly via Amsterdam or Dublin, thus Heathrow will not only lose not only short haul traffic but also long haul international business.

The issues facing Heathrow have been widely reported and I do not underestimate the challenge of balancing competing and interests. My request to you is that you consider the interests of North Yorkshire and the Leeds City Region alongside those other interests.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John Marsden
Chief Executive