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Dear XXX

### **Freedom of Information Act - Cranford Agreement (Heathrow Airport)**

Thank you for your letter of 1 July to the Parliamentary Under Secretary regarding the reasons for the continuation of the Cranford Agreement operation at Heathrow Airport.

You have asked for the following specific information:

*"...Will you therefore please provide documentary evidence to support your Department's view that this matter cannot be dealt with as a "stand alone" subject."*

As you mentioned there is no *Cranford Agreement* document. The noise mitigation measure commonly referred to as the Cranford Agreement, was an undertaking given on 31 July 1952. This was a Ministerially approved undertaking by a senior official, given at a meeting of the Cranford Residents' and District Amenities Association. The undertaking was a statement of best endeavour that, as far as practicable, No. 1 runway (northern runway) would not be used for landings or take-offs to the east, but it was accepted that there would be occasions when, for traffic reasons, both the No. 1 and No. 5 runway (parallel southern runway) would have to be used.

Although this undertaking has not been formally recorded in the past, it is a well established measure that is published within the Manual for Air Traffic Services (1-1-11, *Procedures for Easterly Operations*) and in the Noise Abatement Notification for Heathrow, and any change or withdrawal of it would require prior consultation.

The Government recognises that the circumstances that led to the undertakings given in the agreement have changed significantly since the 1950's. The Department acknowledged this in its evidence to the Terminal 5 Inquiry and advised the Inspector that it was ready in principle to re-examine the merits of the agreement. However, the Air Transport White Paper in December 2003 (Para 11.66) proposed that since a new runway at Heathrow could not come into operation before some time in the period 2015-2020, consideration should be given to the scope for greater utilisation of the two existing runways, for example through mixed mode operations. It went on to say that the impacts and benefits of any such proposal would have to be studied in detail, and there would

need to be a full public consultation. The Department is currently undertaking these studies with a view to consultation next year and decisions later in 2006. While I appreciate that you would like early progress on reviewing the Cranford Agreement, the Department wishes to pursue an approach which minimises confusion and uncertainty and is as clear as possible. For these reasons we consider it better to hold a single consultation process rather than separate consultations within a very short period on the Cranford Agreement and then on other issues which could have a direct bearing on its operation.

I trust this answers your question.

Yours sincerely,

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