

# terminally grounded?

before an expected Government announcement on the airport expansion

ing runways, the three options on the table.

However PM Theresa May has refused to rule out new runways at both loca-

tions, and she is chairing a Cabinet aviation committee due to make a decision next week after the Tory Party Conference finishes.

Campaign groups, councils, and MPs surrounding Gatwick have opposed a second runway due to concerns around infrastruc-

ture and the environment, but business leaders have highlighted the economic boost expansion at the airport could bring.

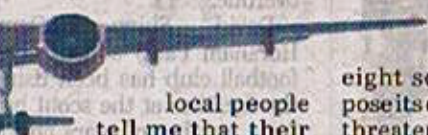
The airport itself announced a strategic partnership with Bechtel, the firm behind the Channel Tunnel and Crossrail,

earlier this week to help deliver a second runway by 2025 if the Government gives the go-ahead to its expansion.

## 'We can't recreate our countryside and heritage'

By David Johnson, Chairman CPRE Sussex:

While travelling around Sussex for the Campaign to Protect Rural England,



local people tell me that their voices are not being heard when it comes to new development in their neighbourhood.

I also see Sussex councils struggling under continuing Government pressure to find yet more sites for development. This pressure is met by fierce community challenges as local residents fight to protect what makes Sussex special - its tranquil rural beauty.

As building new infrastructure and swathes of new homes seem to be regarded as the key to inflating the UK's economy, there is further concern over the

government's imminent statement on airport expansion.

I fully understand why the possibility of a second runway at Gatwick causes such anguish and why 12 local authorities and eight senior MPs all oppose its expansion; it would threaten towns and countryside far and wide.

Already one council, 46 miles from the airport, is arguing for major local road improvements citing Gatwick as a reason.

I remember my very first flight from Gatwick to Guernsey in the Sixties when the airport was more like a train station, just a convenient place to catch a plane.

Today Gatwick is more like an expensive shopping mall and series of car parks with planes attached.

I can also remember a meeting last June in a beautiful C18th farmhouse

adjacent to the southern perimeter where we all had to shout to be heard as the smell of kerosene lingered in the air and jets thundered past.

While the nuisance of aircraft noise, light and air pollution and the impact on local traffic is familiar to many of us, any extension to Gatwick threatens to worsen this blight.

The burden of a greater Gatwick fills me with dread - 'progress' should not lead to a decline in air quality, the bulldozing of ancient woodlands and the loss of glorious, tranquil countryside.

Gatwick lies in the lee of the North Downs surrounded by three 'Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty' which enjoy the same protections as the National Parks.

This irreplaceable landscape is under threat and at least 17 Grade II listed buildings

would need to be bulldozed simply to enable more UK residents to travel out of the country on low cost holidays.

Sussex would shoulder much of the burden of a Gatwick expansion - a report produced by the pro-Gatwick group, Gatwick Diamond, has revealed

the expansion would create the need for 52,000 additional homes and acres of associated services and infrastructure.

This would generate another 100,000 new car journeys and 90,000 new rail passengers - pushing the M23 and M25 to capacity and crippling the London-Brighton rail line. Rail Track has already made it clear that the Brighton Line could not cope with an influx on this scale and would be unable to expand or remedy pinch points on the line. Gatwick already has prob-

lems with aircraft noise it seems unable to solve.

With no respite from two runways, day and night, 7 days a week, what would the impact be of an increase in flights to 560,000 planes a year over a 30 mile radius?

Who will benefit from Gatwick expansion? If the £40 million advertising campaign and propaganda is effective, then probably only Gatwick Airport Ltd, its foreign shareholders and its executives - one of whom, according to the Sunday Times, will benefit by £5 million when the airport is sold.

We may be smart about our technology but we can't recreate our countryside, ancient woodland, and heritage. We are all responsible for our legacy; surely we should be leaving behind a better world by preserving our countryside from such destructive developments as a new runway at Gatwick.

David Johnson

