

Lydd Airport Update - 2019

Progress – London Ashford Airport (Lydd Airport) Expansion

There is very little to add to last year's comment. The airport's management alleged in November 2018 that impeded land purchases were preventing runway expansion. There has been no progress report since and no annual forecast that expansion will take place in the following year.

The holding of a pop concert at the airport in October 2019 with some 6000 fans does not suggest airlines are flocking to ensure the enactment of Lydd Airport's planning permission for a regional airport.

Progress - Financial (Year end December)

The airport remains loss making. Losses increased from £0.8m in 2017 to £1m in 2018, reversing a trend of declining losses. The number employed by the airport is down to 29, compared to 50 in 2015. Accumulated losses to December 31, 2018 now amount to £24m.

The company is only rated as a going concern due to the backing from its parent company, FAL Holding Ltd, based in Saudi Arabia. Similarly its fellow subsidiaries: FAL Aviation UK Ltd (profit of £9,000 in 2018 and accumulated losses of £1.2m), Lydd Golf Course and Driving Range Ltd (loss of £66,000 in 2018 and accumulated losses of £2.4m), Phoenix Aero Engineering Ltd (Loss of £600 in 2018 and accumulated losses of £0.7m) with the added ignominy that it no longer has a licence to carry out maintenance work on aircraft.

Activity

Passenger activity is non-existent. Passenger numbers fell from 865 in 2017 to 284 in 2018 and to only 46 in 2019. (The latter figure is based on the 11 months actual date to November and an estimate for December.) By contrast activity (the number of aircraft movements) has increased by 17% from 22,671 in 2018 to 26,528 in 2019 (again December 2019 is an estimate). Increased private light aircraft activity largely explains the improvement.

Gifts for Councillors

The police investigation into gifts given to councillors ahead of Shepway District Council's decision to approve Lydd Airport's planning application in 2010 was brought to a close in 2018. A formal complaint regarding the handling of the case was subsequently made.

However, we were eventually informed during 2019 that we did not meet the criteria to be given the status of a complaint under the terms of the Statutory Guidance. To fight on would have involved appealing and a lot more work. It was decided that there were more important issues in this world.

The Future

It is difficult to believe the Sheikh is happy with the return on his investment in Lydd Airport – something (existing or alternative use) is bound to happen to this asset at some stage.

Happy New Year!

www.lyddairportaction.co.uk

December 30, 2019