



November 2006

## Lydd Airport Proposals RSPB Position Statement

### Background

The owners of Lydd Airport want to extend the runway length and increase the amount of air traffic to 0.5 million passengers per annum (ppa) initially, rising to 2million ppa in the future. Planning applications are expected before Christmas.

Lydd Airport is located near to the Dungeness to Pett Levels Special Protection Area (SPA), which is designated for its internationally important bird populations. It is also next to Dungeness Special Area of Conservation (SAC), designated for its great crested newt populations and rare shingle habitat. These designations represent the highest level of legal wildlife habitat protection available in Britain.

The RSPB is very concerned about the proposals for expansion of Lydd airport and the impacts this could have on wildlife and the environment.

### Bird strike

The large numbers of birds in the area make Dungeness a high bird strike risk area. Around 90,000 gulls are known to roost near to the airport on Romney sands. Therefore, the airport will have to implement bird hazard management measures, which could include scaring birds away from parts of the SPA.

### Impacts on wildlife and habitats

- Potential disturbance to birds from increased air traffic.

- Runway extension and the filling in of a pond next to the runway will mean the loss of part of Dungeness SAC designated for great crested newts.
- Runway extension will mean the destruction of part of Dungeness Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) designated for its geological importance.
- Air pollution from increased road and air traffic is likely to impact on SSSI lichen communities.
- The Government's policy on safeguarding of airports from bird strike means that major airports can object to proposals that would lead to an increase in birds in the area within 13km of the airport. This means that an expanded Lydd Airport will be able to object to any plans to create wetlands to improve the area for birds, other wildlife, and people.





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### **Climate change**

The plans for Lydd Airport are another example of the increasing expansion of the aviation industry. The RSPB is very concerned about the implications that the growth of air travel, and associated greenhouse gas emissions, has for climate change and consequent adverse impacts on species, whole ecosystems and people. Greenhouse gas emissions from aviation are by far the fastest growing sector. Currently they account for 3.5% worldwide, but will rise to 15% by 2050 if demand is unchecked.

The RSPB considers that human-induced climate change poses the biggest long-term threat to global biodiversity and that the case for further growth in aviation to be questionable. The marginal economic and social benefit of additional growth in aviation is outweighed by its environmental and social costs, and the economic implications of dealing with these.

### **Conclusions**

The South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA) has indicated that it does not believe that an expanded Lydd Airport has the potential to become a regional airport. The policy relating to Lydd has been removed from the latest version of the South

East Plan, which sets the region's development priorities up until 2026. The Plan must now be assessed at an Examination in Public (EiP). The RSPB will be represented at the EiP and opposing any suggestions to reinstate the policy.

We will continue to object to any development that threatens to damage the special wildlife of Dungeness. Over two thousand people have shown their support for our campaign by signing the petition at our Dungeness Reserve.

### **Further information**

If you would like more information about the RSPB's views on the expansion of Lydd Airport, please contact either Alison Giacomelli, Joanna Crouch or Paul Outhwaite on 01273 775333.