

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1

7 August 2004

Nottingham East Midlands Airport (NEMA), Leicestershire

I enclose two self-explanatory letters, the first to you dated 28 July from Mr Steve Charlish, the Chairman of East Leicestershire Villages Against Airspace (ELVAA) of Dovecote House, King's Norton, Leicestershire LE7 9BA, and the second dated 7 August from me to the Managing Director of NEMA, Mr Graham Keddie.

Although I appreciate that as Prime Minister you cannot always descend in the detail of your ministers' departmental responsibilities and that letters of this sort are easily transferred unexamined to the relevant department, I urge you to take a look at what has happened with regard to the imposition of new inbound and outbound flight paths over east and south east Leicestershire, which I represent as the MP for Harborough (Alan Duncan's Melton constituency to my north and east is also affected), but also other flight paths which will affect Ken Clarke's Rushcliffe constituency in southern Nottinghamshire. The CAA and NEMA, aided and abetted by the Department for Transport where the parliamentary under secretary for aviation appears in my opinion to have been following rather than leading, have effectively been getting away with behaviour which is wholly unacceptable in a democracy. They appear to be unaccountable to parliamentary scrutiny, have displayed a lamentable lack of candour and have been advancing their cause without proper consultation with most of the district councils in Leicestershire and *none at all* with the County Council, Leicester City Council and Oadby & Wigston Borough Council, the district council in my constituency that is closest to Leicester.

There have been debates in Westminster Hall about NEMA's plans and in the main chamber this year but the facts that are now apparent were not revealed at the stage those debates took place. They should have been. I have asked a number of questions of the Leader of the House in Business Questions urging him to provide time for a debate and he has always responded with genuine sympathy and interest. I feel, however, that I, and thus my constituents, have been hoodwinked from start to finish and that the behaviour of the Government agencies and NEMA has been far below the standard we ought to expect. The company's desire to expand the airport is understandable economically but the gains will be enjoyed by the company itself whereas the disbenefits will be spread right across east and south Leicestershire, areas of outstanding beauty which, until now, enjoyed 24 hour absence of over-flying by commercial aeroplanes. The attitude of the CAA and NEMA seems to be that we can all go hang while they bash on getting their own way. I am afraid it is not good enough and I urge you to use your influence to rectify the situation, not least by ensuring that NEMA is designated under the Civil Aviation Act. NW Leicestershire District Council, within whose area this misnamed airport sits, cannot realistically be expected to control the activities of this huge, Manchester-based company. It can only be done by central government and it needs to be done soon before things get even worse for the people of this county.

Edward Garnier