



**Department
for Transport**

Jennette Arnold OBE AM
Chair of the London Assembly
City Hall
The Queen's Walk
More London
London
SE1 2AA

From the Minister of State
The Rt. Hon. Simon Burns MP

Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Tel: 020 7944 3082
Fax: 020 7944 4492
E-Mail: simon.burns@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Web site: www.dft.gov.uk

Our Ref: MC/59360

15 NOV 2012

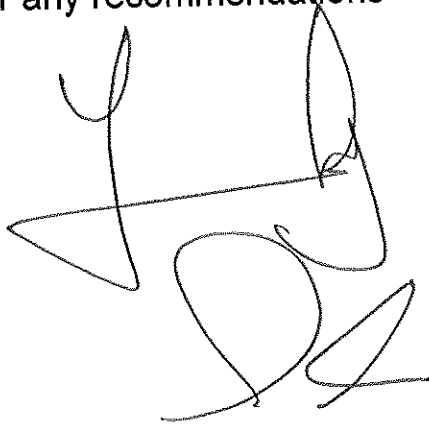
Thank you for your letter of 25 October, about a motion agreed at the 24 October London Assembly Plenary meeting, regarding capacity at the UK's airports.

While your letter outlines the Assembly's reservations around the process the Government has set out to reach a decision on our future airport capacity needs, I think it also makes clear that we are in agreement regarding the importance of this issue. Any decision the Government makes on airport capacity will be highly contentious. It is for this reason that we find ourselves again confronting issues that have been under discussion since the early 1990s. The Government is determined that our successors twenty years hence should not still find themselves in this position.

It is the need to establish a solid evidence base as a foundation for a long term strategy that has underpinned the decisions the Government has made in setting up the Commission. We are not blind to the value of also taking more immediate steps to preserve the UK's hub status in the short and medium term; this is why we have asked Sir Howard Davies to present an interim report on how our current capacity might be optimised. But securing the UK's economic competitiveness, including by supporting London's status as a centre of global trade, requires a longer term approach.

Both the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State have discussed the Commission's workload and timescale with Sir Howard Davies. The published timetable for the Commission sets out the issues that its interim report must address. The Commission will be free to go beyond this if it

wishes to do so. Sir Howard and the Government are in agreement, however, that if the Commission is to succeed, it must put in place a robust evidence base for any recommendations

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a horizontal crossbar, likely representing the name Simon Burns.

THE RT. HON. SIMON BURNS