Thank you for your letter of 10 September, regarding the arrangements for the airfield operation at MOD St Athan. I trust that this letter will clarify the issues which you have raised. However, if you require further explanation, I will be happy to meet you to discuss the MOD’s continued support wherever possible to the development of the St Athan site. I have asked my Private Office to contact yours to make the necessary arrangements.

The long-term intent for the St Athan airfield is that the Welsh Government, under Civilian Aviation Authority regulations, will operate it, as a civilian airfield, from 2019, once essential infrastructure works have been completed. Until that time, the airfield must continue to operate as a military airfield within Military Aviation Authority regulations, and under an Airfield Management Agreement between the Welsh Government and the Ministry of Defence.

The MOD St Athan airfield transition work is being taken forward by a joint Welsh Government and MOD Airfield Transition Steering Group, jointly chaired by an RAF Project Officer and the Welsh Government Project Lead. This group has focussed on the need to increase airfield opening hours, in order to meet the Welsh Government’s request for seven day airfield operations. The outcome of this work was a new Airfield Management Agreement and the award of an airfield services contract to SERCO, with full vesting day on the 1 July.

Welsh Government officials’ intent was that SERCO, their appointed contractor, would provide seven day airfield operating services from the 1 July, full vesting day. However, as SERCO was unable to provide sufficient qualified Air Traffic Control personnel by 1 July, the RAF is providing additional control services to enable limited seven day airfield operations. SERCO is due to complete its training programme by December 2014, or shortly thereafter, at which point they will assume responsibility for the provision of all airfield operating services. Core airfield opening hours for the SERCO contract have been set by Welsh Government officials at 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days per week, and the MOD is supporting these opening hours under the new Airfield Management Agreement.

David T C Davies MP
Chair Welsh Affairs Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
There is no military requirement for an Instrument Landing System, which has been purchased and installed by the Welsh Government for commercial use. The Instrument Landing System can only be fully commissioned once a number of houses and buildings are demolished, as they infringe the Instrument Landing System safety footprint. This will form part of the infrastructure work that enables Welsh Government operation of the airfield, under Civilian Aviation Authority regulations, by 2019. In the meantime, the Welsh Government may be able to apply for an interim Instrument Landing System clearance, subject to further specialist advice. My officials have provided the Welsh Government with all the information required to develop the full Instrument Landing System capability by 2019, and to apply for an interim Instrument Landing System capability in the meantime.

The Super Hangar at the Station does have a paint facility for fast jets, and I understand that the Welsh Government have had preliminary discussions with my officials on its use. However, the Welsh Government have not formally defined their requirement.

Please be assured that the MOD fully understands the importance of this development in Wales and they share in the ambition to make it a success. Therefore, the MOD has and will continue to support the Welsh Government, whenever possible, to assist in providing support for the new job and business development opportunities for the St Athan Air Business Park initiative.

[Signature]

ANNA SOUBRY MP