

Evening Star 24 - England**EveningStarLetters@eveningstar.co.uk****"Blocking Out The Sun:****03 May 2006 | 22:50**

SEASIDE residents are today being urged to back campaigners fighting proposals for an extra runway at Stansted - amid fears they will see less sunshine in future.

Now it is spring, the contrails from jet planes flying over Felixstowe have once again become highly visible. Residents are again complaining on clear mornings, blue sky can be turned white as if it is cloud-covered in just a few hours thanks to sometimes more than a dozen contrails expanding several miles across in the upper atmosphere and joining up.

The concerns came as airport operator BAA today announced it expects the number of passengers using London's three main airports grow by 3 per cent per year to about 165 million by the middle of the next decade. Stansted's passengers are forecast to rise from 22.2 million to 40.5 million.

Air campaigner Jeff Topple, of Gosford Way, Felixstowe, said: "Yesterday at 5.45am the sky was beautiful and blue. Then a series of planes went over leaving these contrails in the sky. "In just over an hour, by 7am, these trails had got wider and wider and the sky was turned white - the sun was gone completely. "If we get any more planes going over I think we can say bye, bye sun.

The Evening Star's

Page 1 of 2 Evening Star - Blocking out the sun

5/5/06

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The growth in air traffic following changes last year to the region's airspace to increase the possible number of flights per day by 30 per cent. Planes are now permitted to fly 5,000 ft lower over the county, and experts say it means around 1,200 planes a day over east Suffolk - including Felixstowe and north Ipswich.

Government expects the number to increase 50pc by 2012 - with three million planes a year using UK airspace - and plans are in hand to expand Stansted and Luton airports. Mr Topple said: "We need to back these people who are campaigning to stop the extra runway at Stansted - we need to get behind them because it will affect us a lot here in Felixstowe if we see more and more planes."

At one stage mid-morning yesterday, more than 18 contrails could be seen in the sky over Felixstowe - showing just how many aircraft are now flying over the resort.

What do you think of the effects of the planes' contrails? Write to Your Letters, Evening Star, 30 Lower Brook Street, Ipswich, IP4 1AN, or e-mail EveningStarLetters@eveningstar.co.uk.

Page 2 of 2 Evening Star - Blocking out the sun

"Baffled Scientists Say Less Sunlight Reaching Earth"

By Robert Roy Britt, LiveScience Managing Editor

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"After dropping for about 15 years, the amount of sunlight Earth reflects back into space, called albedo, has increased since 2000, a new study concludes. That means less energy is reaching the surface. Yet global temperatures have not cooled during the period.

Increasing cloud cover seems to be the reason, but there must also be some other change in the clouds that's not yet understood. "The data also reveal that from 2000 to now the clouds have changed so that the Earth may continue warming, even with declining sunlight," said study leader Philip R. Goode of the New Jersey Institute of Technology. "These large and peculiar variabilities of the clouds, coupled with a resulting increasing albedo, presents a fundamental, unmet challenge for all scientists who wish to understand and predict the Earth's climate."

Cloud changes

Earth's albedo is measured by noting how much reflected sunlight in turn bounces off the Moon, something scientists call earthshine. The observations were made at the Big Bear Solar Observatory in California. The findings will be published Jan. 24 in *Eos*, a weekly newspaper of the American Geophysical Union.

On any given day, about half of Earth is covered by clouds, which reflect more sunlight than land and water. Clouds keep Earth cool by reflecting sunlight, but they can also serve as blankets to trap warmth. High thin clouds are better blankets, while low thick clouds make better coolers. Separately, satellite data recently showed that while the difference between high and low clouds had long been steady at 7-8 percent, in the past five years, for some unknown reason, the difference has jumped to 13 percent. High, warming clouds have increased while low clouds have decreased.

Research shows condensation trails, or contrails from jet airplanes, fuel more highaltitude clouds. But they have not been shown to account for all the observed change. What about global warming? Earth's albedo appears to have experienced a similar reversal during a period running from the 1960s to the mid-1980s. Goode's team says there may be a large, unexplained variation in sunlight reaching the Earth that changes over the course of two decades or so, as well as a large effect of clouds re-arranging by altitude.

How do the findings play into arguments about global warming and the apparent contribution by industrial emissions? That's entirely unclear. "No doubt greenhouse gases are increasing," Goode said in a telephone interview. "No doubt that will cause a warming. The question is, 'Are there other things going on?'"

What is clear is that scientists don't understand clouds very well, as a trio of studies last year also showed. "Clouds are even more uncertain than we thought," Goode said.

Image Gallery: Curious Clouds

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