

Portishead Town Council Comments on Bristol Airport Expansion

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on behalf of Portishead Town Council and for granting an extension to the period of feedback to allow the newly elected town council time to respond.

Portishead Town Council would like to draw North Somerset Council's attention to five key points for consideration alongside this planning application.

1. **SUPPORT:** Portishead Town Council welcomes the short to medium term benefits that the planning application predicts will be brought to the local area.
2. **INCONCLUSIVE:** The impact on the M5 and Junction 19 is insufficiently researched and there is no reference to any mitigation for potential impact. This does not allow Portishead Town Council to draw meaningful conclusions on the impact that the airport expansion would have on Portishead residents' own day to day travel.
3. **INCONCLUSIVE:** Portishead Town Council would like to know what North Somerset District Council's declaration of a status of climate emergency means for routine decision making and seeks clarity on whether approval of this application and the state of emergency can co-exist.
4. **INCONCLUSIVE:** Portishead Town Council would like to highlight that the airport expansion assessments are focussed on the airport, not the air travel. Is North Somerset Council able to confirm that the target for the reduction in carbon emissions for the area - to reduce carbon emissions by 50% by 2035 and 83% by 2050 - can still be met following their approval of an increase in air travel?
5. **OBJECTION:** Portishead Town Council would like to highlight that there is a real risk that national policy in relation to air travel and climate change will change during the time this expansion is under development. This could result in the current plans for expansion (and all subsequent un-costed investment arising from the expansion) not achieving the benefits that were originally predicted to be realised in 2026. However, we will have gained improved airport facilities such as a covered forecourt, a new multi-storey car park, free drop off and set down area and improvements to the terminal building.

Portishead Town Consultation

At the Portishead Town Council meeting on 15th May 2019 Bob Bull, Paddy Sterndale, Paul Gardner and Polly Shepperdson volunteered to form a small working group to put together Portishead Town Council's comment.

Bob and Paddy visited the airport and gained their insights on the benefits that their planning application would offer to the local community.

Bob, Paddy and Polly convened a public meeting for the 22nd May to gather feedback from interested residents. Given the short timescale for advertising the publicity was limited but an advert was included in the NS Times as well as an advert being circulated using Portishead Social Media groups. Approximately 15+ residents attended. The newly elected council has also received 3 formal responses to its invitation to residents to submit formal comments for consideration in the

Town Council's comments. One of these responses is signed by 13 residents. The three responses are included with Portishead Town Council's submission for reference.

Appendix 1: Resident feedback on the consultation

Feedback 1

The proposed expansion of Bristol airport will significantly increase the number of aircraft movements both locally at the airport and also in the surrounding areas flying over established residential areas.

In the Portishead locality, air traffic is already intrusive at peak operating times as the aircraft from Bristol take-off east-west along the runway and commence their climb towards the Severn estuary. Tracking north or northeast they fly above or near Portishead between six and nine thousand feet creating noise for the residents. The noise is exacerbated due to increased engine demand in the aircraft to climb and the low altitude. In addition, at peak times in the early morning, noise is particularly intrusive, especially in the warmer months when house windows are more likely to be open.

On journeys to Bristol Airport, the low altitude and the deployment of aircraft control surfaces elicit significant noise at lower altitudes.

Bristol Airport operations have increased significantly over the past decades. This has grown from both local demand and that of areas in surrounding counties as far as Cornwall, counties in South Wales, Gloucester, Wiltshire etc.

North Somerset has rapidly grown in residential terms, especially Portishead and Weston-super-Mare. Increased road congestion has seen the regular closure of main road arteries like the M5 and A38 due to accidents and traffic volumes. Increased airport traffic generated by customers, suppliers and staff will further exacerbate this.

The increase in air and road traffic will only serve to generate more noise, disturbance and pollution to existing residents. The pressure on air traffic control and flight space will also increase adding risk to aircraft, passengers and residents alike.

The location of Bristol airport was fundamentally flawed from its inception to development as a regional airport. The lack of sustainable road/rail transport and the increased density of residential dwellings which are affected by aircraft operations preclude further expansion if Bristol Airport is to live in harmony with its neighbours.

Further expansion will inevitably reduce the quality of life for all who live within the area affected by aircraft operations.

It is for the above reasons that I strongly object to any further expansion of Bristol Airport aircraft operations.

David Townsend

A black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of David Townsend.

Feedback 2:

Fao Portishead Town Council re proposed expansion of Bristol Airport

As newly elected community representatives we welcome you to your new role. This letter is a response to Town Council's consultation on the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport.

Carbon targets

☐ The UN Secretary General joined climate scientists on 8th May this year in clearly stating that the world must dramatically change the way it fuels factories, vehicles and homes to limit future warming in order to prevent a catastrophic situation world-wide. As a planet, according to the latest science, we have 12 years to prevent climate catastrophe. This will require urgent action to reduce carbon emissions.

☐ North Somerset council has declared a climate emergency, as has parliament. The West of England Combined Authorities have adopted targets in line with the national targets in the Climate Change Act. These targets require carbon emissions in the area to be reduced by 50% by 2035 and by 83% by 2050 on a 2014 baseline. If the expansion plans are approved, carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions from aircraft using Bristol Airport will increase significantly, far outweighing savings made by the region's carbon-reduction policies.

☐ What a 'climate and environmental emergency' means is that we need to be retiring not

expanding or developing fossil-fuel based infrastructure. The argument that the airport itself will be carbon-neutral is beside the point. An airport exists to facilitate and promote air travel. Air travel is one of the key contributors to global warming.

Road traffic

☐ A successful planning application would see twelve million passengers going to and from the airport each year, with more than 85% of passengers arriving by car since public transport access is minimal - no railway access and a single coach service from Bristol, 10miles distant. Aircraft fuel deliveries to Bristol Airport by road will also increase.

☐ Currently, 1.5 million passengers who fly from Bristol drive here from South Wales, a figure likely to increase since the Severn bridge toll has been removed. The Airport's own planning statement says: 'the largest increase in demand for Bristol Airport from 2015 to

2026 is forecast to be in North Devon and Cornwall and South Wales regions.'

☐ This will increase traffic on the M5 and particularly on junction 19 which is already congested in rush hour. Rural roads, already congested, will have to cope with millions more journeys annually. The proposed improvements to transport links are inadequate to mitigate the impact on Portishead residents living at the end of 'the biggest cul-de-sac in the country' (Liam Fox).

☐ Local tax payers, already bearing the burden of increased pollution and congestion, are likely to end up paying for necessary improvements to roads affected, diverting money from other areas.

☐ There is no mention of any improvements to public transport. Anywhere.

Air pollution

☐ The planning application predicts an increase of 16% in the annual level of vehicle emissions by 2026. This is on the assumption that future cars will be cleaner and more efficient which may or may not come to pass. It also does not consider the impact of likely congestion in and around M5 / J19 by Portishead.

☐ Bristol City Council research estimates that around 300 deaths a year - 8.5 per cent of the total number of deaths in Bristol - are affected by air pollution. Parts of Bristol have almost twice the legal levels of pollution. Living in Bristol is equivalent to smoking more than 500

cigarettes per year, and on a still day it equates to smoking 8 cigarettes just in one day.

(REFERENCE) .

☐ Many Portishead residents work in Bristol. Their health, particularly any commuting by bicycle, will be further compromised by this increase in air pollution.

Loss of greenbelt land and impact on wildlife

☐ Bristol Airport admits that the proposed development will have significant effects on the environment yet is demanding that all airport operational and related land to be 'released from the Green Belt designation'. In law breaches of the Green Belt should only be allowed by local authorities 'in exceptional circumstances'. No such circumstances apply.

☐ The airport is looking to extend the Silver Zone car park to add approximately 2,700 additional spaces on green belt land that's less than 2km from a Special Area of Conservation, home to two endangered species of bat.

☒ Light pollution from 24-hour aviation and parking will increase significantly. The lighting at Bristol Airport is comparable to the middle of Bristol (reference CPRE Dark Skies) with some lighting columns 8metres and some floodlighting masts 30metres high. Light pollution poses a threat to wildlife, impacting both plant and animal physiology. Light pollution is linked to the alarming decline in our insect populations, many of which are nocturnal.

☒ Grassland rich in diverse species and ancient hedgerows will disappear, altering the local eco-system and putting further strain on wildlife. Increased light, noise, road and air traffic will result in loss of habitat and green corridors, impacting on breeding and plant systems. These effects will reach far beyond the Airport's boundaries.

Realisable benefits to the local economy?

How and whether an expansion of the airport will bring benefits to the local economy (beyond some new jobs being created at the airport) is debatable even if demand for flights is high.

☒ Demand for meat, dairy and single-use plastic have all plummeted since public awareness of the climate emergency has come to the fore over the last 12 months. Reduction in demand for air travel is likely to follow.

☒ Fossil fuel prices are set to rise, as is carbon tax. These costs will be passed on to the consumer and will likely also impact passenger numbers.

☒ Government action to reduce carbon emissions from flights is a natural next step following the declaration of a climate emergency by parliament.

☒ Setting aside the environmental / ethical case against airport expansion it is doubtful whether projected benefits to the local economy will even be realisable given the current context.

Accountability

☒ Given what we know about climate change, loss of species and dangers to health, we urge you as our elected representatives on the grounds above to object to the planned expansion of Bristol airport.

☒ Your accountability extends not only to those of voting age locally but also to our young people. It is their future world we hold in trust. At the Youth Climate Strike in Bristol on Friday 24th May stopping the airport expansion was top of the agenda.

☒ We look forward to seeing the Town Council's response to the proposed development and trust it will show how the concerns listed above have been taken into account.

Yours, the undersigned:

13 signatories

Feedback 3:

Ursula and Jeff Lucas

It's a great shame that we can't attend the meeting because we would have like to heard, and considered, all viewpoints, but here goes:

We initially did an information search and found some helpful sources as follows:

1. The Green Party View: <https://northsomerset.greenparty.org.uk/news/news-items-2019/2019jan/bristol-airport-expansion.html>

2. The Stop Bristol Airport Expansion group website <http://www.stopbristolairportexpansion.org/why-oppose-airport-expansion/>. This lists a wide range of factors to be taken into account.

3. This lead us to a relevant and comprehensive report The Economic Impact of Bristol International Airport https://www.aef.org.uk/uploads/whitelegg_report.pdf. This report was written in 2005, but it seems very relevant to the current issue. It is a report for the Parish Councils Airport Association and appears to have been sponsored by the Council for the Protection of Rural England and Friends of the Earth, Bristol. So it is difficult to know how independent the author, Prof. John Whitelegg, is. However, it evaluates a range of evidence and seems to me, to be quite authoritative. As a Chartered Accountant I am usually quite sceptical about the calculations supporting claimed 'economic benefits' and this report expresses these concerns.

4. Good old Wrington Parish Council have done a good job on providing a range of information links on their website <https://wringtonparishcouncil.gov.uk/>. And this may be an example that Portishead could follow in future on key issues.

Phew! Having worked our way through all of this, we also took into account the views of other councils. And we note that 21 Parish Councils surrounding the airport have expressed concerns about traffic and an increase in carbon emissions.

All in all we oppose expansion primarily because of the climate crisis. The IPCC report says that we have just 12 years to change our polluting culture or face irreversible climate change. We have to think of the future for our children and grandchildren. Even if one argues that air travel is a relatively small contributor, we need to curb expansion of anything that contributes to climate change. When one adds into this the lack of road and parking infrastructure around the airport, and the increased air pollution through surrounding areas of habitation, then the case against expansion is further supported. We don't buy into the economic arguments for expansion. There are strong arguments that it will lead to an outflow rather than an inflow of economic benefits. There will be additional jobs, but in our view, we should be focussing on job creation through improving green infrastructure rather than

carbon emitting infrastructure. No expansion could mean additional car trips to other airports. However, we don't think that this is a significant factor relative to the issues just listed above.

Thanks again for organising the meeting and I hope that you find some of these information sources informative if you haven't already seen them.

Feedback 4:

Paul Murphy Westering, Battery Lane Portishead BS20 7JD 27th May 2019 Re proposed expansion of Bristol Airport - Portishead Town Council consultation. I am writing to highlight two areas of concern relating to the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport as a Portishead resident. 1. Transport infrastructure The main motorway access to Bristol Airport is via M5 junction 19. This junction is already a bottleneck congested with local traffic at rush hours in spite of recent improvements to the junction. The proposed expansion aims to increase traffic from 10m passengers annually to 12m. These additional 2m passengers will put increased pressure on this already busy junction and increase travel time for local commuters and may also impact on business locally. I run a company with offices in Bristol and Portishead and am concerned about the potential impact on travel from Portishead to Bristol and vice versa. Additionally, though there is proposed s106 agreement to provide improved surface access, this is focused on the A38, not on the wider impact of the increased traffic. The proposals include larger car parks to cater for more cars but there is no mention of funding for improving public transport. We are already seeing traffic filtering off the M5 and coming through the centre of Portishead to Clevedon when the M5 is busy. This will only increase with a 20% increase in traffic to the airport. I am concerned that there has been little attention to the impact this will have on Portishead residents and local business. 2. The realisability of the proposed local economic benefit given the nationally and locally declared climate emergency. It is unclear how approving this application with the resultant growth in air and surface transport can be compatible with taking steps to tackle a 'climate emergency' as has recently been declared by North Somerset council and by UK parliament. In response to this declared emergency, national policy regarding air travel is arguably likely to change in the near future. Even if local economic benefits are deemed to override climate considerations - a questionable stance in itself and one which locally elected politicians will need to be able to defend - the question is whether such benefits will be realisable before action is taken at national level to reduce air travel. I hope these concerns are taken into account in Portishead Town Council's submission to the consultation and look forward to seeing a copy of the submission in due course.

Yours sincerely Paul Murphy