

Prepared statement by Richard Lancaster for the Bristol Airport Expansion Appeal [GATELEY-GHAM.FID54667]

My name is Richard Lancaster, I live in Nailsea North Somerset and have been a member of Bristol Greenpeace for over thirty years. Greenpeace opposes all airport expansions and believes aviation must be fully accounted for in the economy-wide drive to achieve net zero emissions. Aviation needs to be taxed to help fund the green recovery and to reduce demand for flying. For far too long aviation has been heavily subsidised with no fuel tax and Air Passenger Duty that has not kept up with inflation and was recently frozen for domestic flights.

It is clear aviation will need to use technology to mitigate emissions but there is currently no such thing as zero carbon aviation and the technology to make significant reductions in carbon emissions is decades away - flying electric powered taxis is not going to make much of an impact on the task ahead for mass transport solutions.

The UK Government released its Decarbonising Transport Plan last week. Greenpeace, while welcoming the move to introduce such a plan, says it falls well short of expectations in tackling the climate crisis especially when it comes to aviation. I quote

*“With aviation, the net zero targets are welcome, but getting there through technological advances alone is a very big bet with very long odds. If it happens, everyone will be delighted, but we need a mechanism to achieve those same emissions cuts if the advances don’t materialise, and that mechanism can’t be offsetting. Unless we’re very lucky, we’ll need some demand constraint, and it would be foolish of the government not to be planning that now. A frequent flier levy has been shown to be easily understood and a fair mechanism for containing unsustainable demand. It also has the big advantage of being available to implement now.”*

Bristol Airport could only achieve a carbon neutral airport in the next couple of years by excluding emissions from the planes themselves and by either excluding vehicle journeys or by using offsetting which allow the industry to keep on polluting whilst the schemes themselves regularly fail to absorb the claimed emissions. The polluter has to be made to pay; pressure is growing for a frequent flyer levy and ticket prices will inevitably increase resulting in lower demand. How can Bristol Airport justify its passenger growth figures?

The Prime Minister has said he intends to “build back better” by initiating a green recovery. Such a recovery needs to set aviation on a fairer and more sustainable course, while providing any support necessary for workers to shift to green jobs.

Aviation must change if we are to aspire to passing on a life-sustaining planet to future generations and public opinion is shifting in favour of better regulation and a willingness to consider steps such as flying less. The aviation industry and international Governments need to realise that continual growth is not sustainable unless and until carbon free flight throughout the globe can be achieved. The idea of expanding any airport whilst we are facing a climate emergency is helping to commit humanity and the biodiversity of the planet to a very uncertain future.