

## Objection to Bristol Airport Expansion, Public Enquiry July 2021

I live in central Bristol, and I'm here today to represent the group Christian Climate Action, a Christian organisation that seeks to tell the truth about the Climate Emergency we are currently in, and the many ways in which human beings are exploiting the Earth's resources to the detriment of the Climate and Ecology around us. We believe that human beings have a purpose, to nurture and work in partnership with the Earth, and thereby benefit from its bounty and natural resources, not to exploit it. If we love and respect the Earth it will feed and sustain us. As Christians, like many other people, we also believe in climate justice, and are painfully aware that the Climate Emergency impacts those parts of the world that have made the least contribution to causing it. And the wealthy minority who are mostly responsible for creating the problem, are relatively unscathed by its effects.

With that in mind, we strongly object to the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport. The principal reason being, the resulting increase in passengers and flights that will pass through the airport if these plans are permitted to go ahead. I understand the plans are for an extra 2 million passengers a year, I can't find an estimate of the number of extra flights that equates to, but a rough calculation would suggest at least 10,000. The emissions from these additional flights have been estimated at almost 1 million extra tonnes of carbon dioxide being produced per annum. The point is, that however carbon neutral the Airport itself claims to be, and I'm sure they will be using all the latest eco-friendly building materials and methods, the fact remains that the *flights* will increase, and the net carbon emissions will therefore go up by 1 million tonnes, a significant and potentially deadly increase.

These emissions contravene a number of legal commitments made by the UK Government in recent years, I'm talking in particular about the 2008 Climate Act, with its commitment to reducing to net zero carbon by 2030, and of course the 2015 Paris Agreement on Climate, in which similar commitments were made by the majority of countries around the world. We are being urged to reduce carbon emissions across the board, and yet Bristol Airport is clearly moving in the opposite direction. Air travel is not the way forward - in 2018, aviation accounted for a massive 2.4 per cent of total carbon emissions worldwide. If global commercial aviation were a country, it would rank number 6 in the world, between Japan and Germany. Non-CO2 effects, such as warming induced by aircraft contrails and other pollutants, bring the combined total contribution of commercial aviation to approximately 5 percent of the world's climate-warming problem.

This year, 2021, in which the United Kingdom hosted the G7 summit in June, as well as the COP26 climate talks taking place in Glasgow in November, our country must do all we can to lead the world by example, and look to reduce, not increase our carbon emissions. We have the opportunity here and now to take that step. The decision you make about the future of Bristol Airport is highly significant, and being watched by other airports around the country and indeed around the world.

Regarding developments in aviation efficiency, it has been claimed that the aviation industry has greatly improved its fuel efficiency over recent decades, and is therefore on the way to becoming a far more eco-friendly means of travel. There is indeed some truth in this, however the problem is that at the same time, the *volume* of air travel has increased hugely

over the same period, and in fact we see that the net result is that overall emissions have increased by 70% over the past 15 years. The need is therefore not just to improve the efficiency of aircraft engines, thereby reducing carbon emissions per flight, but rather it is to fly less, to restrict air journeys to essential flights only, and encourage other transport options that are less harmful. Human beings simply have to learn to use alternative means of transport.

On the subject of other kinds of pollution, it is clear that Aviation in general, and Bristol Airport in particular, has a massive impact on pollution in its various forms. Air quality around airports is affected massively, with not just planes taking off and landing, but the extra cars on the road taking people to and from. Noise pollution is a serious problem in the immediate area. With the planned introduction of night flights, aircraft noise disrupts sleep, can impact children's education, and there is evidence it could increase cardiovascular risk. Airports can generate water pollution due to their handling of jet fuel and de-icing chemicals, with the added risk of proximity to drinking water reservoirs. Aviation activities emit ozone and ultrafine particles, both of which are health hazards. Piston engines used widely in general aviation burn Avgas, releasing toxic lead into the atmosphere.

It has also been argued that this expansion of the airport will bring increased prosperity to the region, more jobs, more business opportunities etc. This is clearly a false argument, in that we should rather be creating jobs in areas that reduce our carbon emissions, eg home insulation, renewable energy, electric vehicles, recycling, developing heat-pumps, jobs in forestry, ocean conservation etc. These things will work positively, not just in the area of reducing the effects of the Climate Emergency, but also they will create jobs and prosperity for the future.

Regarding the use of local rather than central airports, another argument put forward for expanding Bristol Airport, is that it enables people to fly from an airport close to home, rather than driving to a central airport, eg Heathrow, by car, with the additional environmental cost of car use. This again is a false argument, in that we should be building better public transport infrastructure, to enable those people who need to fly, to travel to central airports by efficient and clean public transport.

The future of the human race demands that we reduce air travel, not expand it. We have to Act Now to change people's attitudes and assumptions, to demonstrate new ways of living and travelling, and work together to reduce the harmful impact of fossil fuel related activity on our planet. I therefore urge you, on behalf of Christian Climate Action, to reject the current proposal for the expansion of Bristol Airport.