



The countryside charity
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Chair
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DRAFT ORAL STATEMENT TO BRISTOL AIRPORT EXPANSION APPEAL HEARING

Good Afternoon. Thank you for the opportunity to make a short statement. Let me first say that I am not going to repeat points we have made in earlier CPRE submissions as I know these will have been carefully read and it simply wastes time to repeat them again.

CPRE is the oldest Countryside charity in England and our core object is to protect the Countryside. That remit, in the modern world, includes doing so for the sake of the health, mental health and welfare benefits it brings to people from all backgrounds and because of the countryside's key role in helping address climate change.

Today I would like to make three very simple but very important points.

First, given what we now know about the speed and the potentially catastrophic effects of climate change there can be no excuse for not including aviation fully in plans to mitigate the problems. The amount of flying quite simply has to reduce not increase. Hopes for non-polluting aircraft and reliance on "off-setting" schemes with few guarantees of delivery. They may deliver results one day but that day is a long time off and hopes are not guarantees. Until they are we must act on the precautionary basis that they may not deliver what we hope for. Expansion of Bristol Airport would run directly contrary to this principle and to the climate change and environmental policies of the nearby local authorities and of national government. To allow expansion on the eve of the Glasgow Climate Change Conference at which the UK wishes to play a leading role would make a complete nonsense of what are claimed to be policy priorities.

Second, it is essential that the Inspectors take note of the huge concerns about the effects on the wider region. Traffic effects will be widespread and will be over and above the, frankly, unmanageable impact on the road system immediately serving the airport. The promoters know that most airport traffic will be cars – look at the scale of their car parking proposals. They also know that there are virtually no significant road improvements capable of being delivered to cope with that demand even if that were an acceptable approach, which it is not. The new Mayor for the West of England has made it clear that he will not support the building of a new South Bristol ring road through Whitchurch, which was one of the key schemes in the old Joint Local Transport Plan on which the airport promoters were relying. Public and professional doubts about the wisdom of so called "Smart Motorways" grow by the day.



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However, this is not just about traffic congestion and noise and pollution from cars. Any increase in the number of flights has a damaging effect on the tranquillity of the countryside across a wide area. All night flights upset the delicate equilibrium on which ecosystems depend and we are only just starting to understand how important those ecosystems are. It is essential that all of this is properly recognised and that the expansion is not allowed to go ahead.

Finally, let me say something about the economic case and the best interests of business. Earlier work commissioned by CPRE and not effectively refuted by the promoters demonstrated that the claimed economic benefits were massively overstated. They were also in part based on the concept of robbing Peter to pay Paul – taking activity from other regional airports. Given that this is already a wealthy region, that is hardly a good way to “level up”. CPRE is not hostile to business. I most certainly am not. But we would appeal to all those representing business interests to recognise, - and therefore for the Inspectors to recognise, - that the time has indeed come to “build back better” – and in particular greener, and to put investment and effort into the new industries, the new technologies and the new ways of working. We should not be investing in the old ones that have such damaging effects of our environment, health, welfare and indeed ultimately on our economy when we have to pay for the consequences.

Thank you.