

My name is Dr Elena Hensinger

I am a Data Scientist and the co-organiser of the Sea Mills and Coombe Dingle Climate Action Group in Bristol.

Today, I speak as an individual, citizen of Bristol and parent.

In 2018, Bristol City Council declared a Climate Emergency and pledged for the city to become carbon neutral by 2030. In 2019, The West of England Combined Authority declared a climate emergency. The Climate Emergency Action Plan by WECA from 2020 lists a 'Low Carbon Transport System' as first point, stating 'Work to decarbonise the transport system and increase cycling and walking and the use of public transport; building on positive behaviour change following the covid-19 pandemic lockdown period'. While this seems more focused on more local travel, the changed attitudes following the covid-19 pandemic will also affect the way we do business and enjoy holidays.

As second point, the Action Plan lists 'Low carbon business', with 'Help business and local people benefit from growth in the green economy; maximising government investment in the region and supporting our businesses to build back better'.

Air travel is not 'low carbon', and an expansion is not working towards decarbonising the transport system. This is why an airport expansion would be completely against the goals of The City of Bristol and the West of England Combined Authority, which are representatives of their citizens.

Travelling by planes is dependent on fossil fuels, which produce Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) when burnt, as well as additional emissions, such as nitrogen oxides (NO_x). Carbon dioxide is a heat-trapping gas, also called greenhouse gas. It contributes to the "greenhouse effect", which the NASA describes as 'warming that results when the atmosphere traps heat radiating from Earth toward space.'

There is a clear link between flying and the changes in our Earth's atmosphere, and we have to reduce, not increase, our emissions of CO₂, which includes plane travel.

Furthermore, on our journey through the covid pandemic, there is indication that people will change their flying behaviour, having had time to re-assess their priorities and values. In March and April, a snapshot survey by the University of Bristol's Cabot Institute for the Environment, asked nearly 500 respondents about how they might fly in the wake of the global pandemic. The results were that nearly 58% of respondents said after they have been vaccinated their air travel would reduce. An article describing this survey states 'Furthermore, the vast majority of respondents (83.6 per cent) acknowledged their personal use of air travel contributes to climate change.' People take flight-free year pledges, companies and organisations learnt throughout the lockdowns that it is possible to have meetings and even conferences online and as hybrid events.

This all shows that there is awarenesses by consumers on their impact and choices they can make. And that there is no need and no justification for an expansion of air travel, that is goes against what our communities want, and that those recent changes in people's attitudes towards flying need to be taken into account in decision making.

Thank you.

Links:

<https://davidsuzuki.org/what-you-can-do/air-travel-climate-change/>

<https://www.easa.europa.eu/eaer/climate-change/aviation-environmental-impacts>

<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2019/sep/19/airlines-co2-emissions-rising-up-to-70-faster-than-predicted>

<https://climate.nasa.gov/vital-signs/carbon-dioxide/>

<https://climate.nasa.gov/causes/>

<https://thebristolcable.org/2021/06/covid-19-has-made-us-reconsider-how-much-we-fly-research-suggests/>

<http://www.bris.ac.uk/neuroscience/news/2021/flying.html>

<https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/climate-emergency-declared-west-england-combined-authority/>

<https://westofengland-ca.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s2194/11c2%20-%20CE%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

Dr. Elena Hensinger

Co-founder of the [Sea Mills and Coombe Dingle Climate Action Group](#)