

## Transcript of Evidence given at Bristol Airport Expansion Inquiry

1. My name is Ian Coatman and I am speaking in a personal capacity against the expansion of Bristol Airport. I want to concentrate on climate change and the cumulative impacts of airport development.
2. I live in Leeds, where I am a member of a community group, very much like BAAN, that was set up to oppose the expansion of Leeds Bradford Airport. In fact, there are many similar groups within the UK, because the reality that we have to address is that there are many airports trying to expand at the same time. Gatwick, Heathrow and Luton have notified the government of their intent to apply for expansion, and Southampton and Stansted have been granted permission (though each is being appealed); and all this while Bristol and Leeds Bradford are going through the local planning process.
3. Leeds Bradford Airport (LBA) plans to expand to accommodate an additional 3 million passengers per annum. In support of that application, Leeds Bradford Airport has argued that the climate change impact is small compared to the UK carbon budget and they have not considered any cumulative impact with other proposed airport expansion.
4. I have seen the documents on the website for this inquiry. I say immediately - I have not read them all – there is a lot – but I understand that Bristol Airport is doing the same thing as LBA and have ignored the cumulative impact of their expansion with other airport expansion, so they can say their individual impact is small when viewed against the whole of the UK carbon budget.
5. This is fundamentally wrong. The UK carbon budget is for all greenhouse gas emissions, so obviously any one development individually is going to look small in comparison. But if you compare against the whole UK carbon budget, you must take all the other relevant airport expansion together to understand the true impact. If you do that, it is absolutely obvious that the impact is very large and seriously damaging.
6. I see that the analysis done by the New Economics Foundation on the cumulative impact – “Turbulence Expected, The Climate Cost of Airport

Expansion” is a core document in this inquiry (CD 9.32). On pg 27 NEF states that its modelling suggests that just four expansion schemes (Bristol; Leeds-Bradford; Southampton and Stansted – the ones going through the local planning systems) “will account for an increase in airport-level emissions of around 600,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2035, according to current national accounting protocols. When considering total climate impact, an increase in airport-level CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent emissions of up to 3.7 million tonnes (maximum impact) is possible (Table 14).” So, that is a very significant impact indeed.

7. Inspectors, I ask that you take this cumulative impact into account when you make your decision – either by finding the cumulative impact of the expansion, with other expansion, is unacceptable; or if you don’t have enough information from the airport about the cumulative impact, then refusing permission for that reason. Because of how important the cumulative impact is.
8. Climate change does not respect local authority borders. Or any borders. That is the reality of the science. Emissions in Bristol affect us in Leeds, and vice versa. Emissions in the UK affect other countries.
9. Across the world we are seeing the impacts of climate change. It’s almost impossible to turn on the news these days without seeing these consequences. In the last week, we have seen an unprecedented heat wave in Western Canada and the US – over 4 deg C above previous records<sup>1</sup>, devastating fires in Siberia, devastating floods in Northern Europe. And this week in the UK, for the very first time, the Met Office issued an extreme heat warning.<sup>2</sup>
10. And it is the cumulative impact of many decisions that is causing climate breakdown. And ‘climate breakdown’ is the correct term.
11. I guess we all understand the link between the burning of fossil fuels, the release of CO<sub>2</sub> is into the atmosphere and the heating of the earth. But it’s not a linear relationship. Unless urgent and unprecedented action is

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-57654133>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-57893385>

taken, then we will reach a point where the acceleration in temperatures becomes so great that we get runaway climate change – hot house earth – tipping point – call it what you want. It was this that the landmark UN IPCC report warned us about in 2019. The report said that we had maybe up to 2030 to have brought our greenhouse emissions to net zero otherwise we will reach this tipping point.<sup>3</sup> Some models predict that by the end of the century we could, unless we take emergency action now, be somewhere between 3 and 5 deg<sup>4</sup> above pre industrial temperature levels. To put some sort of perspective on this, 4 deg is roughly the difference in temperature between now and the last ice age. So, children born today face the prospect of a planet where the temperature could be as different to ours now, as ours is to the last ice age. Again, that is not exaggeration or scaremongering; it is the science, that caused and still causes the IPCC, our CCC in the UK, and many others, so much concern. If we do not take swift and decisive action, we face a future in which emergency becomes the norm, but where no state will have the capacity to respond.

12. I want to briefly address the socio-economics of airport expansion, principally through reference to the NEF ‘Turbulence Expected’ report which describes the full costs of the climate impact of expansion – costs that should be taken into account. This is something the we, in Leeds, too, have emphasised in relation to LBA’s proposed expansion, because we understand how desperately people want jobs and economic benefits, and how that can be manipulated if the full information on economic costs of climate change is not brought to the fore. I note that NEF will be giving evidence on that. Inspectors, I urge you to give NEF’s evidence significant weight.
13. In the words of the UN rights chief “The economies of all nations, the institutional, political, social and cultural fabric of every state, and the rights of all people, and future generations, will be impacted by climate change”<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/oct/08/global-warming-must-not-exceed-15c-warns-landmark-un-report>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01125-x>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.voanews.com/europe/bachelet-climate-change-global-threat-human-rights>

14. Many of these things, as individuals, we can't influence, but some things we can and I applaud N Somerset Council for taking its responsibilities seriously. I applaud them for rejecting this application.
15. Inspectors, this Inquiry will provide you with the evidence and the legal framework to reject this expansion. What is required is the will to use it – for the sake of everyone and for future generations – and I am confident that you will do so.

Thank you.

Ian Coatman

23/7/21