

## Statement to Bristol Airport Planning Inquiry - 22nd July 2021

Good morning. My name is Mavis Zutshi. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important Planning Inquiry. I am speaking here simply as a concerned citizen and former resident having lived in the city of Bristol for more than 30 years. I have flown from Bristol Airport on many occasions in the past and remember it when it was a small collection of buildings known as Lulsgate Airport. I have a family connection with the airport as my brother worked there for several years, running the then In-Flight Catering Service for Dan-Air Airlines.

However, I like many thousands of others, have changed my mind and my behaviour in relation to flying and in recent years seek alternatives as much as possible. Today, I have to speak against the airport's plan for expansion.

The Inspectors have advised us that this is a local inquiry, that our contributions must be new and not repetitious. They don't want us to simply endorse what others have said. Any evidence presented must relate to the specific impact of these proposals, of this development, not of the impact of airports in general. They want to hear unique and personal testimony.

There is a major problem in heeding this advice, correct and proper though it might be in terms of planning procedure. The climate emergency is not a unique or personal or local experience - it is a collective, shared one, albeit not equally shared in the severity of its impact. And while it may manifest itself locally and with great intensity, its touch is felt simultaneously around the world, in different forms. I now live near Stroud in Gloucestershire and although I wouldn't suffer the same direct impact of the increased night flights, the more polluted air, the busier, noisier roads or the damage to the natural environment, as many of the more local residents will, the increased carbon emissions will certainly have an impact much wider than the local.

The airport's legal representative, Mr. Michael Humphries QC was at pains to stress in his opening statement on Tuesday that this is a purely local issue which must be decided on the basis of the relevant planning regulations. He asserts that the inquiry has no remit to comment on carbon emissions from air traffic which, he states, are a matter of national policy. This is perfectly understandable as it suits the airport's purposes well to disassociate from and separate off the responsibility for the carbon emissions generated by the 23,800 additional flights. Unfortunately, the forces we have unleashed that we now know to be the climate emergency pay scant attention to planning regulations or local boundaries. Mr. Humphries delicately chooses to describe the airport's expansion proposal as a 'non-controversial' physical development, aiming to provide high-quality infrastructure, car-parking and improvements to roads, no different from any other infrastructure development. This is ingenuous to say the least. Not only does it trivialise the very real negative impact of the genuinely 'local' issues embedded in its proposals, it is only too happy for the uncomfortable fact of one million additional tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> being released into the atmosphere to remain firmly in the national policy basket, as though it shared no responsibility for that outcome.

But the rest of us cannot afford the luxury of such disassociation. In the context of the global climate and ecological emergencies which we are now living through, there is no longer a place called 'local'. We are all interconnected, local actions have global consequences and vice-versa.

This is nowhere better illustrated than in the actions of the owner of Bristol Airport, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Fund. With \$221.2 billion in net assets as of December 31, 2020 the OTPF is the largest pension plan in Canada. It clearly has scant regard for the impact of its investment plans on the 'local' people or environment of this small and (to it) distant part of the world - North Somerset. Its 'local' is Ontario and the profit maximisation of the OTP Fund.

And that drive for profit maximisation fuels this speculative proposal by Bristol Airport for further expansion with no real evidence of 'local' demand for 23,800 additional flights per annum. In that sense, it is no different from the countless developments we have seen over the decades of out-of-town shopping centres or supermarkets, seeking to attract custom away from existing retail outlets in the centres. Such developments have left us with the social and economic consequences of

hollowed-out town centres. These consequences are at least theoretically reversible. Similar decisions today both about this particular application and the other list of airports queuing up for permission to expand will not be reversible in the same way. We will not be afforded the luxury of hindsight, if we continue to fuel climate chaos.

I therefore urge the Inspectors to reject the appeal by Bristol Airport and to uphold the original decision made by North Somerset Council.

Mavis Zutshi