

Draft statement

I would like briefly to introduce myself and to say why I have requested to speak against the expansion of Bristol Airport

I am 57 yrs old, live in Bath and have a daughter aged 24 yrs living in Bristol.

I have been aware of the dangers of 'global warming' as it used to be called and of the need for sustainability in the way we live since about the time my daughter was born - but I was busy as a new working parent and I thought that governments including our own would have the situation covered and would take the right steps to address the approaching danger.

So I stopped worrying about it, mostly, and got on with my life - taking the occasional holiday abroad, driving when I wanted to - living according to my financial means - not the health and sustainability of the planet.

25 years later and we know that governments including our own have failed to take action at anything like the scale or speed necessary. The 2018 IPCC report flagging up just how little time is left to have any chance of keeping the rise in temperatures to a level at which the worst consequences of climate change can possibly be avoided.

Scientists and commentators such as Sir David Attenborough have continued to raise their voices with those of 1000s of ordinary people to demand urgent and immediate action in response to the science. Indeed, very many scientists including Sir David King, the former Chief Scientific Adviser to Government, have said there is even less time to make the drastic changes needed to cut carbon emissions.

Sir David King has said "What we do in the next five years will determine the future of humanity for the next millennium."

"Net zero greenhouse emissions by 2050 is no longer enough to halt the climate crisis and we need to reach carbon net zero by 2035 to 2040,"

“Only by acting quickly and robustly will we be able to stabilise climatic conditions, ensure a just transition and protect vital biodiversity and ecosystem functions for the next generation,”

This is why I have requested to speak at this Inquiry.

Bristol Airport's expansion, if permitted, will allow an additional 23,800 flights, an estimated 10,000 car movements a day and an additional 1 million tonnes of carbon emissions a year.

This would take us further from meeting our legal obligations under the Paris Agreement, further away from meeting the UK government's Climate Change Act and further from the government's commitment to be carbon neutral by 2050.

In addition to the legal obligations and commitments the UK government declared a climate emergency in May 2019; this followed on from the declarations in North Somerset in February 2019 and Bath & NES in March 2019 and Bristol City Council earlier on in November 2018

In other emergency situations in history actions have been taken with urgency & commitment -for example in the Great Fire of London people's houses were pulled down to create fire breaks, in WW2 black out rules, rationing & conscription.

Currently, as the Covid pandemic hit across the world, science and scientists were given a leading role - with Governments listening to and acting on their advice. IN the UK as elsewhere this has led to many of the usual rules, regulations and habits by which we live being overturned - because the need to follow the science was recognised.

The climate emergency needs to be given the same and even greater weight right now and the science on climate change to be afforded the appropriate emergency response in all our decision making.

Every fraction of a degree of heating that can be prevented is essential.

So, when North Somerset council considered Bristol Airport's application to expand and increase the capacity, and knowing that this would generate very significant additional carbon emissions, as 93% of an airport's emissions are from flights, they considered the climate emergency to be a relevant factor.

IN order to act in line with their declaration of a climate emergency as well as taking other considerations into account they rejected the application.

Now this Inquiry is charged with considering the Airport's appeal.

My question and challenge is whether this Inquiry will act in line with both the legal obligations in relation to climate change and the reality of the climate emergency as did the councillors of North Somerset Council when they rejected the Airports application.

Will this Inquiry consider the lives of all of our children and grandchildren who will be seriously impacted by climate change if it is not urgently addressed and the lives of people living now in the vulnerable parts of the global South ?

Will this Inquiry, listen to the scientists who have warned that the extreme weather events seen just in the past few weeks in Canada and the US and in Europe - in Germany and other countries are a direct result of climate change and will only grow in frequency and extent if the emergency is not acted on as an emergency & carbon emissions drastically cut from present levels ?

This is not a theoretical, future concern - which can continue to be ignored in favour of the normal rules or business as usual.

To grant the airport their expansion request would not only lead to increasing carbon emissions at the exact time we need to cut carbon emissions as far and as fast as we can to have a chance of keeping in line with legal obligations and the climate emergency - it would also send the message that the old 'business as usual' is fine.

If the UK allows airport expansion then what message is this sending to those people already suffering the devastating impacts of climate change ? What message does it send about UK leadership on climate action when COP26 is due to take place in Glasgow this November ?

In an emergency you have to act differently and act accordingly in line with the science as with Covid - and not by rules made before the emergency was declared, and especially not when the impacts of the emergency have already resulted in 1000s of deaths. My plea is that this Inquiry itself acts in line with the climate emergency & rejects the expansion of Bristol airport.

Thank you