

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today – I am the leader of the Greens in Bristol. We are the largest Green Group in the Country and are equal with Labour on Bristol City Council. We rose from 11 to 24 councillors in the election this May and I believe that increase in support reflects the growing awareness of the climate emergency and the need to take action to limit carbon emissions to halt global warming.

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your purpose is to hear the appeal against the decision of the majority of North Somerset Councillors' refusal to grant an expansion to the airport.

As a local politician, I would like to talk about democracy – especially focussing on the fact that we live in a representative democracy and what that means in the context of the decisions taken to bring us to this place here today. – and what weight I believe you should give to the democratic forces that have spoken so loudly about the airport's plans to expand.

Let's just remind ourselves of how a representative democracy works. We have elections – at all levels – town, council, city, regional, and national – where we choose/ elect individuals to represent the will of the people. Once elected, these representatives' job is to listen to the people and to take the decisions which they believe represent what citizens want.

I'd like to remind the inspectors of how the process of our representative democracy has worked -in and around- the lead up to this hearing.

As I said, you're hearing an appeal of the decision of the 27 members of the North Somerset Council to reject the application by the Airport to expand. In making their decision,

those elected representatives took note of the comments made by the public - I have here those comments, they are bound in two sections – these are the comments made by the public in favour of the application and these are the comments opposing the expansion - over eleven and a half thousand responses that were made – with 84% of the local residents who responded were objecting to the plans. North **Somerset** Council listened to the people they represent and decided in their Planning and Regulatory Committee to vote against the expansion plans by a cross-party majority of 18 to 9.

North Somerset County Council is not, however, the only democratic body which has spoken on this application and the appeal by the airport.

At the local **Town Council** level of Government, Weston-Super-Mare Town Council joined many other local councils and carried a motion of objection in their meeting on 18 Nov 2019. (This was the first ever such meeting to include signing in gratitude of that decision!).

At the local **Council** level, Bath and North East Somerset Council (**BANES**) formally objected to the expansion plans in a motion in March 2019 and the democratic representatives there submitted a formal letter of objection on 18 May 2019.

Bristol City Council passed a motion against the planned expansion on 8 Dec 2020 saying that '*the expansion is incompatible with the regions carbon reduction plans*'. The motion was carried by the Labour, Lib Dem and Green Group.

At the regional level, recently elected West of England Combined Authority (WECA) **Mayor Dan Norris** has voiced clear

opposition to the expansion plans. In a recent article in South Bristol Voice he said *'I'm sticking firm to my commitment to oppose Bristol Airport's proposed expansion'...* he has, more recently spoken about the need for 'moral leadership' and has proposed a motion to the Joint Committee which consists of himself as Metro mayor and the four leaders of the local councils. – the motion makes clear that this region-wide combined representative authority now firmly opposes these expansion plans. The WECA mayor has said, I quote - *When it comes to the airports further expansion our net zero objectives will have been seen to be a sham – Mayor Dan Norris represents 1.1 million citizens.*

At a National Governmental level, **Dr Liam Fox** the local MP – who has won the vote to represent the views of the constituency and make decisions on behalf of the people, has submitted a number of formal objections to the expansion plans; in his recent letter to the inquiry dated 31 August 2021 he says that the local road network is *'straining at the seams'* and *'I believe this is the primary reason why the proposed expansion of airport passenger numbers should not go ahead.'*

Wera Hobhouse Lib Dem MP for Bath has said in a recent press release *'In light of the necessity of achieving net-zero emissions, I therefore oppose the proposed expansion at Bristol Airport'* and *'Business as usual is not an option'*.
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In addition to these specific objections to the airport's plans, all of the local councils (Bristol, BANES, South Glos and North Somerset) and the local combined authority (WECA) have declared climate emergencies

So I think I have made it clear – the people have spoken – loudly and unambiguously – they have marched on the streets, they have written letters, they have lodged formal objections, I myself coordinated a ‘die-in’ at the airport to highlight the consequences of increasing carbon emissions. My electorate know my views on the airport’s plans to expand and know I oppose it – and I was re-elected to represent them again this May - the people have spoken and their representatives have heard and responded.

What’s the point of having a representative democracy if you don’t listen? Please hear how all the layers of elected representatives – at town, county,, city, regional and national level have objected to the application to expand. Please respect the authority of the North somerset Council to refuse the application- recognise the wider political support for their decision - and reject the appeal.

Thank you