

Statement to the Bristol Airport Planning Appeal Inspectors

Fire, flood, drought, heatwave, storm. We're all seeing the news, reading the headlines, even experiencing first hand the effects of the climate and ecological emergency. We all heard those frightening words from the UN Secretary General about the latest IPCC report, 'Code Red for Humanity'. Code Red, a warning or signal of imminent danger. IMMINENT danger. That's a clear and chilling urgent message to us all.

My name is Ros Pears. I live in Radstock, 16 mile south east of Bristol Airport. I am pretty nervous coming here today but I am also very grateful to have this opportunity to speak to you all.

Mr Ware, Mrs Searson, Mr Young, I envy you greatly. I envy you your roles here and this position of responsibility and power the three of you have at this pivotal point in the life of humans on this planet. I envy you this opportunity you have here to make a significant difference in this climate crisis we are all facing.

Let's not dwell on the past 30 years or so when, as a human race, we could have embraced the science and de-carbonised slowly but steadily. We could have avoided ending up in the dire situation we now find ourselves in, but here we are, Code Red for Humanity.

Make no mistake about it, we are all living through history. We are all in this situation together. We can all play our part in making a difference.

This is far bigger than a local issue. We are in a global climate and ecological crisis and every single decision that limits or reduces carbon emissions counts. Not that I in any way want to diminish the significance of the issues facing everyone living near this airport. Air pollution, noise, sleep deprivation, traffic congestion, illegal parking, taxi drivers defecating in front gardens, it must be a living hell.

I know we are now many weeks into this appeal process and you will no doubt have been bombarded with arguments for the economic necessity of this airport expanding. Probably also the smoke and mirrors of magical hi-tech solutions that don't even exist yet and some that may never exist.

Mr Ware, Mrs Searson, Mr Young, I understand that in your work you have to balance out all the issues presented here. However, this inquiry is different now from those in the past. We cannot un-know what we now all know. What issues now can outweigh the threat of imminent climate breakdown and the collapse of life as we know it?

So what's different now is the enormous moral responsibility on us all to make the right choices for the future of the planet. It is a time now for looking beyond immediate personal gains and connecting fully with our inner moral compass . And doing the right thing . Our species caused this crisis and now we have the opportunity to make urgent changes to remedy what we can.

Yes, as individuals there is much we can do in changing our lifestyles, including flying less. But the real impact in drastically reducing global carbon emissions lies with decisions made by governments, corporations, big polluting businesses, the aviation

industry, and yes, planning inspectorates. Uncomfortable as this may be for some to hear, it is morally wrong for ANY of us to continue with the carbon-intensive business as usual of the past 50 years. None of us are exempt from morality's burden. The aviation industry included.

Those supporting this airport's expansion are surely missing this point. If your house is on fire, you don't start planning and building a large extension, you take urgent immediate action to put that fire out. If everyone's home is on fire, we all unite and work together to put the fire out.

And we in the Global North arguably have an even greater moral responsibility to do the right thing. There are many parts of the world where people are living far more sustainable lifestyles than most of us here and who are already feeling the effects of climate breakdown in extreme ways. They haven't caused this crisis, we have.

Looking around this room, it doesn't feel as if WE are in imminent danger right now does it? In spite of the terrifying images on the news, the experiences some of us may have had personally of heatwaves or floods, for example, at times everything seems, well, just normal, and safe and comfortable even. I know that's making assumptions about everyone here today, but speaking for myself, I have a roof over my head, food in the fridge, electricity to power that fridge, freely flowing drinking water on tap, money in the bank, and I'm pretty confident my house and garden will still be there when I go home later today, next week, next month even.

If we try now, could we really connect now, here, in this room, with what it actually feels like being on the front line of climate

breakdown. So many examples I could give. Let's just think of the Solomon Islands. You and your family live in the Solomon Islands. The Solomon Islands, that produce 1/100th of 1% of global greenhouse gases, just by the way.

Neighbouring houses have already been engulfed by the sea. You have already moved and rebuilt your family's house further from the shoreline, raised it up on stilts even, a huge labour. Slowly but surely sea levels are rising and storm surges and extreme weather events are increasing. Salty water is seeping into the land where you grow your food, drinking water supplies are salinated. Can I really imagine what the fear and powerlessness must feel like? Can I put myself in those people's shoes and connect with how terrifying it must be, not knowing if my family home is safe, not knowing what to do to keep my children safe. Whether I will find clean water to drink. Will my crops fail? What will the next storm surge bring? Where should we go? Where will my family be safe?

It's hard to really imagine what that must feel like, isn't it? And it's upsetting too.

We are all in this climate crisis together. We have one precious planet that we have caused unimaginable damage to. We all have a moral duty to do the right thing.

Mr Ware, Mrs Searson, Mr Young, what an opportunity you have here to be on the right side of history. The North Somerset councillors made a courageous and just decision last year when they rejected the planning application for the expansion of Bristol Airport. Now the onus is on you.

Fire, flood, drought, heatwave, storm. Code Red for Humanity. I wish you all the courage and wisdom in the world to make the right decision here. Bristol airport is big enough. It should not be allowed to expand.

Thank you so much for listening to me today.

Ros Pears

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