

PCAA - Further response to the inquiry into Bristol Airport Limited's planning appeal

Planning Inspectorate Reference: APP/D0121/W/20/3259234

Local Planning Authority Reference, North Somerset Council: 18/P/5118/OUT

The PCAA responds as follows to the request by the inspectors hearing the inquiry to comment by 19 December 2021 on the Environment Act 2021 and draft decision notice CMA.3 of COP26.

Environment Act 2021

1. In this part of the response, all statutory references are to the Environment Act 2021 and all references to the SoS are to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.
2. Under section 1, the SoS is required to set a long-term target in respect of at least one matter within each of four priority areas, which include air quality and biodiversity. Under section 2, the SoS is required to set a target in respect of the annual mean level of PM_{2.5} in ambient air. The duties under section 1 and section 2 are cumulative. Under section 3(1), the SoS must set a species abundance target. Each target must be set by regulations. Under section 4(1), the SoS must seek independent expert advice before making the regulations. Section 4(9) provides that the regulations must be laid before Parliament by 31 October 2022 for approval under the affirmative procedure.
3. Section 8 provides, in sub-section (1), that the SoS must prepare an environmental improvement plan and, in subsections (7) and (8), that the document entitled "A green future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment" is to be treated as the first environmental improvement plan under section 8. That document, on page 128, is described as "*a living blueprint for the environment covering the next quarter of a century*" and provides that "*Turning the vision into reality requires solid foundations: comprehensive, reliable data, strong governance, a robust delivery framework, and everyone to play their part*".
4. We take the view that both the air quality targets and the species abundance target are material considerations in this inquiry. If they are to be credible and effective, they will have to satisfy three basic requirements:
 - a. to apply to civil aviation in the same way as they apply to other sectors of the economy;
 - b. within civil aviation, to apply equally to all major airports including Bristol Airport; and

- c. during the period from 9 November 2021, the date on which the Environment Act 2021 received Royal Assent, to the date on which the statutory instrument under section 4(9) comes into force, not to be prejudiced, curtailed or diminished by planning decisions or other executive acts which permit increases in harmful emissions or additional burdens on the natural environment. To do so would be to limit the freedom of Parliament to shape environmental law and policy within its discretion.
- 5. The long-term objectives of the first environmental improvement plan have been given statutory force. They must be taken into account. We therefore take the view that they should be treated as a material consideration in the Inquiry.
- 6. We also take the view that until the targets under sections 1 and 3 have been set by the SoS and approved by Parliament, and their impact on civil aviation has been assessed by independent scientists, any decision by the inspectors on the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport would be premature.

CMA.3

- 7. CMA.3 is an environmental policy document of major international importance. It is fully supported by the United Kingdom government. We believe that it should be treated as a material consideration in the inquiry. In particular, we note that paragraph 26 of CMA.3 emphasises the urgent need for accelerated action and implementation of domestic mitigation measures in accordance with paragraph 2 of Article 4 of the Paris Agreement. This supports paragraph 1 of CMA.3 which recognizes the importance of the best available science for effective climate action and policymaking
- 8. We also note the emphasis on the importance of local communities in paragraphs 62, 72, 88 and 93 of CMA.3. We therefore take the view that this is another reason why the inspectors should give substantial weight to the health and environmental impacts of the proposed development on local communities.

11 December 2021

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The PCAA response on Luton Airport is as follows:

Luton Airport planning application 21/00031/VARCON was approved on 1 December 2021 by the Development Control Committee of the Luton Borough Council to increase passenger numbers from 18 mppa to 19 mppa. The links to the planning meetings have been given showing that the application was granted consent:

First meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRwnTEdegl8>

Second meeting:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G7qziEiUU48>

Net Zero Target

To achieve net zero target in the UK by 2050, the Committee on Climate Change has stated that there should be growth of no more than 25% in aviation passenger numbers on 2018 levels. Yet current planned airport expansions will result in nearly three times this number. Expansion is planned at Bristol, Heathrow, Leeds/Bradford, Luton, Southampton, and Stansted. Manston Airport is waiting for a decision by the Secretary of State for Transport and Gatwick plans to submit its Development Consent Order application. (Ref: <https://www.aef.org.uk/uk-airport-expansions/>).

It is our view that international measures to limit aviation emissions will be insufficient without strong domestic and regional measures delivered in parallel. It is essential that a cumulative approach to emissions from planned airport expansion is taken, as shown in submissions by NSC, BAAN and the PCAA to the Inquiry.

We reiterate the conclusion of our PCAA Inquiry 129 Note:

“While the NZS provides economy-wide pathways to reach net zero, it does not provide any new proposed measures for aviation beyond those discussed in the Jet Zero consultation (although it does commit to some limited additional funding for SAF infrastructure). It does not therefore reduce the significant policy uncertainties associated with aviation being able to achieve net zero emissions by 2050, especially in the context of expansion at Bristol Airport and elsewhere, as identified previously in PCAA/W04/4.”

Transport

There are many differences between the Luton application and Bristol. For example, the transport situation in Luton is very different from Bristol. There is a direct train to Luton Airport from

Blackfriars, City Thameslink, Farringdon and St Pancras International. Trains travel every 10 minutes at peak time and they run through the night. The DART (metro rail service) which connects Luton Parkway Station to Luton Airport is expected to open in 2022. This of course contrasts with the position in Bristol where the large majority of transfers are by car.

Because of this, as we have heard in this inquiry from residents and others, there is considerable congestion on the roads around Bristol Airport caused even by the existing passenger numbers. By contrast to the largely narrow congested roads surrounding Bristol Airport, at Luton Airport there are plans for a new £124m dual carriageway access road linking A1081 to the airport which have been approved.

17 December 2021