

Nine Reasons why Airport Expansion is a Crazy Idea!

Aviation is the Fastest Growing Cause of Climate Change

Despite myths propagated by the airline industry, **aviation already accounts for almost 15% of the UK's contribution to climate change.** To make matters worse, **aviation is the UK's fastest-growing source of greenhouse-gas emissions.** **By 2050, flying could account for more than 50% of the UK's contribution to climate change.** (Source: Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research)

These are stark statistics but offer a conservative estimate of the damage contributed by aviation, since they only count flights departing the UK – not those returning! The UK's top climatologists predict that **aviation's emissions alone are predicted to exceed the government's target for the country's entire output of greenhouse gases in 2050 by around 134%.** (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research)

We could close every factory, lock away every car and turn off every light in the country, but it won't halt global warming if we carry on taking planes as often as we do.

Despite the overwhelming amount of scientific evidence highlighting the threat from aviation, the sector is **not considered by any binding international treaties** such as the Kyoto protocol. Furthermore, it **will not be subject to the legally binding emission reductions demanded by the UK's proposed 'Climate Bill.'**

Emissions from aircraft are especially problematic because of the height at which they are emitted and the particularly noxious mix of gases, **making them 2.7 times more damaging than the effect of their carbon dioxide alone** (known as radiative forcing). (Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research)

There are no alternative fuels for aircraft and the Royal Commission does not expect any significant technological developments that would lessen aviation's impact for several decades. The British government admits that "there is no viable alternative currently visible to kerosene as an aviation fuel." (*The Guardian*, 28/02/06)

Aviation is so damaging to the climate that jetting off to Sydney for a holiday produces the same amount of CO₂ as a mini driving around the earth 640 times! Equally, a weekend break in Prague by plane would generate as much pollution as a train traveling from London to Madras and back. (*HACAN Clearskies*)

Aviation is Wiping Communities Off the Map

At its seven airports across the UK BAA is proposing the **biggest single programme of airport expansion that the UK will have ever seen**, looking for **new runways at Stansted, Heathrow, Edinburgh and possibly Glasgow, with significant increases in flights at Gatwick, Aberdeen and Southampton.** (*HACAN Clearskies*)

These expansions, if approved, would see the demolition of entire swathes of countryside, as well as forced dispersals of large and established communities as the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee; the growth the government foresees will require "the equivalent of another Heathrow every 5 years." (*Select Committee on Environmental Audit, 10th March 2004, Third Report*)

Aviation is Creating Massive Noise Pollution



Living under the flight path is like living on a motorway. **Over 1 million people live under the flight paths to the Heathrow** and many have to endure a plane flying over every 45 seconds. (*Hacan Clearskies*) In fact, 14% of people in the UK are moderately or extremely bothered by aircraft noise (*MORI 2004*) and this figure is only going to increase as airports expand.

The World Health Organisation has expressed concern about the impact of aviation on human health. Long term (5-30 years) exposure to air traffic noise levels averaging 65 to 75 decibels increases blood pressure and the risk of hypertension. Sleep disturbance leads to fatigue, hypertension, greater risk of heart and respiratory problems, poor concentration in work and school, increased risk of accidents, depression, anxiety and higher rates of drug and alcohol abuse. (*Greenskies Alliance*)

Aviation is Causing Illegal Levels of Pollution

Heathrow airport is already **breaching UK and EU legal limits for the high levels of nitrogen dioxide and therefore the present growth in the number of flights is probably unlawful.** The government's own figures show that if a third runway is built 35,000 people would be exposed to this poisonous gas. (*Airport Environment Federation, 2006*)

There is a growing body of evidence, particularly from the USA, which points to **higher levels of cancer around major airports.** (*HACAN Clearskies*)

Aviation is Mostly Unnecessary

45% of air journeys in Europe are less than 500km – about the distance from London to the Scottish border. (*UK Department for Transport*) These journeys are to destinations easily reachable by train and bus, which are both **around ten times less polluting.** (*Transport 2000*)

The number one destination from Heathrow isn't New York or Bermuda - it's Paris!

Aviation is Diverting Money Away From Public Services

The airlines receive over **£9 billion in tax breaks each year because of tax-free fuel and VAT-free tickets and planes.** That's enough to buy over 30 new hospitals, build 2,000 new schools, put at least 450,000 new police on the beat, and pay the tuition fees of over 3 million students!

Meanwhile, **over the last 10 years as air travel fares have come down by 42%, bus fares have been raised by 42%.** This hits the poorest the hardest, as 90% of public transport journeys taken by the poorest 20% are by bus.

'Cheap' Flights are a Perk for the Rich

It's the rich who are really benefiting from the artificially low prices of air travel. The average income of people using Stansted Airport is £47,000 per year – and it's supposed to be a budget airport! Low-skilled people and people on benefits, despite making up a quarter of the population, only took 6% of the flights whilst the top quarter of the population took almost half of all flights. (*Civil Aviation Authority*)

75% of those who use budget airlines are in social classes A, B and C, while people with second homes abroad take an average of six return flights a year. Most of the growth, the government envisages, will take place among the wealthiest 10%. (*Civil Aviation Authority*)

Airport Expansion is Exterminating Biodiversity

Hundreds of acres of ancient oak woodland would have to be destroyed to make way for the government's expansion plans. Some of the trees facing the axe are over 400 years old. (*Woodland Trust*) Ponds, meadows, hedgerows and ditches – all important habitats, are also facing extermination.

At Luton airport alone, 330 hectares of green belt are under threat. (*SLAP*) Near Stansted airport around **60 species of bird will lose their habitats** including a number which are on the RSPB's "red list" because they are vulnerable species at risk. (*SSE*) Otters living in the vicinity of Edinburgh airport will lose their habitats. (*The Scotsman*) The oldest RSPB nature reserve in the UK will be wiped out by expansion at Lydd Airport, in Kent.

Airport Expansion Will Destroy Important Heritage Sites

Philip Venning, the secretary of the Society for the Preservation of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), established by William Morris in 1877, said: "This (the government's plans for airport expansion) is potentially **the biggest single number of destructions of historic buildings in living memory.**" (*The Guardian*)

At risk include 64 Grade II listed buildings and a 900 year old church near Stansted; a 15th Century Tithe Barn and the 12th Century St Mary's Church in Harmondsworth, near Heathrow; a wooden Providence Chapel at Charlwood near Gatwick, which was used to shelter troops during the Napoleonic Wars; and a 14th Century Cooling Castle near Cliffe's proposed airport in Kent.