

We are writing to urge you to vote against the Government's National Policy Statement (NPS) proposing a third runway at Heathrow Airport. Heathrow expansion is incompatible with protecting people from dangerous climate change or illegal levels of air pollution.

There is no plan to mitigate Heathrow's emissions

Heathrow is already the biggest single source of emissions in the UK. Expansion is expected to generate an extra 300 million tonnes of carbon dioxide. MPs are being asked to vote in favour of the Heathrow NPS in the absence of any emissions mitigation framework, strategy or policies to ensure expansion will be consistent with the UK's existing commitments under the 2008 Climate Change Act (CCA). Tightened climate constraints necessitated by the Paris Agreement will be almost impossible to meet without addressing aviation emissions.

MPs should insist all major infrastructure projects demonstrate their compatibility with climate commitments, or vote against if they cannot.

UK leadership on Climate Change

The UK parliament is rightly praised for passing the world-leading Climate Change Act in 2008, replicated since in countries the world over. But any claims to international climate leadership will be undermined by a vote in favour of Heathrow expansion.

The Government's independent climate advisors the Committee on Climate Change have written to Transport Secretary Chris Grayling to note its concerns that the expansion will hamper efforts to meet UK climate change targets and the Paris Agreement.

Scotland

Scotland can be proud of its record on climate change, but being a climate leader means saying no to polluting projects like Heathrow expansion.

Earlier this month Scotland rightly celebrated leading the way on climate action with a 49% cut in greenhouse gas emissions. While new climate legislation has been introduced at Holyrood to increase climate ambition, it's impossible to see how supporting aviation expansion in Westminster is compatible with such an approach.

It is also very difficult to uncover credible evidence behind the jobs benefits Heathrow Airport claims will come to Scotland.

Heathrow or regional airports - not both

The Airports Commission (AC) previously concluded that Heathrow expansion 'could' take place without breaching our CCA commitments - but only if accompanied by measures to greatly restrain growth at regional airports.

Yet at the same time as publishing the final Heathrow NPS, the Transport Secretary published a document entitled 'Making the best use of our existing runways', part of the DfT's wider Aviation Strategy development process, which sets out the government's ambitions to maximise growth at all UK airports.

Aviation already has generous provision for emissions growth, compared to other sectors. In this context, the Committee on Climate Change (CCC) is clear that "other sectors must reduce emissions by more than 80%, and in many cases will likely need to reach zero."

It is clear that pursuing both Heathrow expansion and regional airport growth is an approach that even the Airports Commissions' believe is incompatible with CCA commitments, and seems inconsistent with CCC analysis.

Local impacts & air pollution

Hundreds of homes, a primary school, community centres and a special needs centre in the path of the airport will be demolished. Extra flights will increase air and noise pollution for thousands more living nearby.

Heathrow, and the surrounding area, already suffers illegal levels of air pollution problem. Dirty air causes 9,000 early deaths in London alone, and a study of 13 European cities found that London has the joint third worst air quality after Moscow and Paris. The economic burden of air pollution estimated at £20bn annually due to health costs and working days lost to ill health.

Climate change impacts are already here

The world has warmed by an average of 1 degree above pre-industrial levels. Unprecedentedly powerful hurricanes have wreaked death and destruction in Pacific islands. Record summer temperatures in cities across Asia are surpassing the limit of what human bodies can endure. The rate of Antarctic ice entering the sea has tripled in the last five years, putting coastal communities in peril.

Humanity is rapidly using up the remaining 'budget' of carbon emissions beyond which a 1.5 degree temperature rise will be unavoidable, triggering irreversible 'tipping points' and accelerating warming.

Decisions taken in the remainder of this decade will go a long way to determining whether humanity can limit the most devastating impacts of climate change. We urge you to prioritise people and planet by voting to reject Heathrow expansion.

Yours sincerely,

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