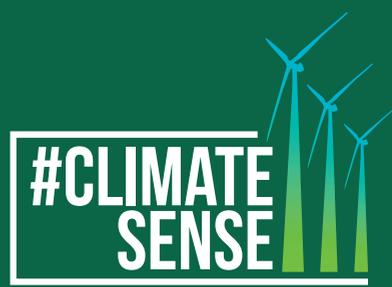


**THE REAL CHOICE:
EXPAND AVIATION OR
ACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE**



#NONEWRUNWAYS
THERE IS ANOTHER WAY



INTRODUCTION

In light of the upcoming decision being presented to MPs on whether airport expansion should take place at Heathrow or Gatwick, this campaign briefing sets out arguments against development at either airport, and raises some serious issues with the analyses and recommendations which have brought us to this point. The Green Party believes that no decision can be made on where a new runway could be built until a full assessment has been made of whether this is possible, given our Government's legal responsibilities to tackle climate change and pollution.

On July 1st 2015, the Airports Commission recommended that Heathrow would be the best place for airport expansion to take place. But it also said that Gatwick presents "a plausible case for expansion". The Airports Commission had previously been briefed by David Cameron to make recommendations on economic grounds for expansion in the South East. Early on it ruled out other options, including no new runway, and now it is presenting MPs with a choice between Heathrow and Gatwick. MPs are due to decide this autumn.

The Greens and NGOs concerned with the impacts of aviation say this is a false choice: the climate costs are just too high. Rather than committing the UK to an ever more intensive reliance on fossil fuels, Parliament should be looking seriously at how we transition to low carbon alternatives to maintain the UK's connectivity. The Greens and many NGOs concerned with climate change are therefore calling for "no new runways" and asking MPs to vote for "none of the above".

Green MP Caroline Lucas says:

"Further airport expansion will be extremely damaging to our efforts to meet our climate change targets. Aviation is estimated to have made up at the very least 7.5% of the UK's Greenhouse Gas emissions last year and the Airport Commission's forecasts show that aviation is set to breach its sector's already generous targets - even if new runways aren't built. If the Government is serious about tackling climate change then it must ditch any ideas of building new runways in the South East."

The partners in the event in London on September 12 2015 have concerns about the impacts that airport expansion will bring in terms of noise, air quality, increased traffic and public transport congestion, loss of homes, historic buildings and green spaces. Campaigns by organisations like SHE, ESSCAN, HACAN and GACC are a testament to the impact current levels and patterns of aviation have across the South East and London. All these issues present a compelling case for not proceeding with a new runway. The focus of this report, however, is on climate change and the gaping carbon hole at the centre of the Airport Commission's analysis.

THE CARBON BURDEN

Carbon emissions are one of the main contributors to climate change, the impacts of which are being felt across the globe. Emissions from aviation represent roughly 6% of the UK's total carbon output¹ and are set to increase, whether or not airport expansion goes ahead². As acknowledged by the Airports Commission, a new runway would serve to accelerate this rate of growth.³

The legally binding Climate Change Act requires the UK to limit national carbon emissions to roughly 160 million tonnes (Mt) per year by 2050 – an 80% reduction on 1990 levels. The Government and the Committee on Climate Change (CCC), its statutory adviser, say that emissions from aviation should not take up more than a quarter of that figure – 37.5 Mt – by 2050. However, the Airports Commission predicts that emissions from aviation could exceed this figure, even before a new runway is built. The Aviation Environment Federation says: “If aviation blows its budget, other sectors, such as agriculture, would have to shoulder tougher carbon cuts than the Committee on Climate Change considers to be feasible.”⁴ Indeed, the Airports Commission has suggested that other airports across the country, or indeed other sectors, might have to compensate for the increased emissions associated with a new runway. However, there has been no indication of how this would work in practice, nor attention to the impacts this might have on other regions or sectors of the economy.

1 www.theccc.org.uk/charts-data/ukemissions-by-sector/aviation/

2 www.aef.org.uk/uploads/All-set-for-take-off-AEF-report.pdf

3 The UK's national emissions accounting approach does not incorporate those emissions from the goods and services we import.

4 www.aef.org.uk/2015/06/19/aviation-emissions-to-soar-under-airports-commission-proposals-new-aef-report-shows/

THE CARBON GAP IN THE AIRPORTS COMMISSION REPORT

The Aviation Environment Federation has analysed the findings of the Airports Commission, and has raised concerns with its approach to tackling carbon emissions from aviation.

- It concludes that the carbon cap is unlikely to be achieved with aviation expansion, and provides no clear explanation of how it could be!
- Increase in carbon cost which might reduce carbon emissions is more theoretical than possible. Furthermore, once carbon costs are accounted for in the economic analysis, the financial benefits argument no longer stands.
- Reliance on biofuels to reduce carbon is unconvincing
- Changes to plane operating regimes which might reduce carbon unlikely to be welcomed by the industry as more costly
- Future predictions of CO₂ from aircraft are not agreed between Government and the Airports Commission.

The 'carbon gap', in the Airports Commission report, laid out here by the AEF reflects an undeniable problem; building new runways impedes our ability to tackle climate change seriously. Faced with the likelihood that an extra runway would threaten the UK's ability to restrict its emissions to those required under the Climate Change Act, the Airports Commission has been unable to demonstrate how this could be resolved.

THE ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS DON'T STAND UP

The Airports Commission has failed to make a strong case for the economic benefits of expansion, as high aviation emissions as a result of expansion in the South East could require cuts at other airports or alternative sectors in order to meet carbon targets.

The Committee on Climate Change earlier this year [advised the Airports Commission](#): “Higher aviation emissions than 2005 levels in 2050 should not be planned for, since this would imply greater than 85% cuts in other sectors; there is limited confidence about the scope for this.” Since emissions are forecast to exceed this level even without new runways, the CCC has told Government it must come up with a plan for limiting emissions to this level by the end of 2016.⁵

The AEF also raises concerns with the Airport Commission’s economic justification for expansion. They highlight that the Airports Commission has continued to quote claims about economic benefits from expansion which do not include wider carbon costs. According to the AEF, “the Commission did produce some economic analysis that reflects the need for CO2 constraints on aviation, it has bent over backwards to hide its own conclusions on this topic, and to downplay the fact that properly including carbon costs very largely trashes any economic case for expansion.” Under the AEF’s analysis, we could be looking at a £9 billion loss to the economy, rather than growth⁶.

5 [Recommendation 19 in www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/6.738_CCC_ExecSummary_2015_FINAL_WEB_250615.pdf]

6 www.aef.org.uk/uploads/All-set-for-take-off-AEF-report.pdf

OUR CARBON COMMITMENTS

From November 30th to December 11th, 190 nations, including Britain, meet in Paris to discuss a new global agreement on limiting carbon emissions for at least the next decade. Under current commitments, the EU will cut its emissions by 40%, compared with 1990 levels, by 2030. As a member of the EU, the UK is responsible for participating in these efforts, and yet expanding aviation in the UK would clearly jeopardise its ability to do so.

There is consensus amongst climate experts that man-made climate change poses a grave threat to life as we know it, and furthermore, leading economists acknowledge that the economic opportunities presented by the transition to a low carbon future are huge .

Professor Alice Bows-Larkin of the Tyndall Centre at Manchester University:

“Avoiding the 2°C target with any reasonable chance requires all sectors within, and associated with, wealthy nations to make immediate and urgent cuts to their CO2 emissions. The aviation sector has very few technical options to make any more than an incremental adjustment to energy efficiency or carbon intensity in the next decade. This points towards demand management as an essential way of cutting levels of CO2 from the aviation sector in the near-term. Providing more airport capacity is at odds with managing demand, and although may improve efficiency in the short-term, within only a few years the increase in passenger numbers will help to uphold growth rates in the CO2 from flights to and from wealthy nations, jeopardising the goal of maintaining global temperatures below the 2°C threshold. So, whilst air travel may bring with it benefits to the minority of the global population in a position to take advantage of it, the impacts of climate change caused by breaching the 2°C threshold will affect everyone”.

Our Prime Minister, David Cameron has acknowledged the grave threat posed by climate change, and yet we continue to see him pushing for expansion of this carbon-intensive industry.

RECOMMENDATIONS: THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

We believe that airports and aviation should not be expanded. The Airports Commission is wrong in saying we can shift carbon constraints to elsewhere in the economy or onto other airports just so that Heathrow can expand. Furthermore, as outlined in this document, and more widely by the AEF, we are yet to hear a valid case for the economic benefits flowing from the expansion of Heathrow or Gatwick.

5 [Recommendation 19 in www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/6.738_CCC_ExecSummary_2015_FINAL_WEB_250615.pdf]

6 www.aef.org.uk/uploads/All-set-for-take-off-AEF-report.pdf

SO WHAT IS THE WAY FORWARD?

1. ELIMINATE EFFECTIVE SUBSIDIES TO AVIATION

The aviation sector is currently exempt from fuel tax and VAT, such that aviation is unfairly subsidised in relation to other transport sectors. This must end. Additionally, flights to destinations outside of the EU are currently not included in the Emissions Trading Scheme.

In 2016 the European Parliament will consider re-introducing flights to outside the EU into the emissions trading scheme. The Green Party's MEPs will be working hard to get this approved.

2. INTRODUCE A FREQUENT FLYER LEVY

Currently, 15% of people in the UK take 70% of flights. Greens want to ensure a fairer system; one that ensures that the small number of individuals driving demand for aviation pay their fair share⁹. (To the extent that the EU ETS or other possible global measures to tackle emissions fall short of the action needed, introduce complementary measures such as a frequent flyer levy).

3. INVEST IN SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT ALTERNATIVES

Rather than investing public funds in the infrastructure that would be necessary to support expansion at Heathrow, investment should be focused on supporting sustainable transport and promoting alternatives to business travel such as more widespread use of videoconferencing. Improvements should be made to public transport in the UK (including bringing the railways back into public hands) and ground and sea links to Europe.

We don't have a choice between Heathrow and Gatwick. The only choice is to stop airport expansion for the sake of a stable climate. We need to think again about how our economy can grow and our travel needs be met, without unsustainable carbon emissions.

9 <http://afreeride.org>



To find out more about our No New Runways campaign visit:
www.segreens.com/join_our_no_new_runways_campaign

More information about the Green Party:
www.greenparty.org.uk

For further information on the environmental impacts of aviation, please see the AEF's website, which provides excellent briefings and resources: www.aef.org.uk/

Thanks: to HACAN for the photo;
to the AEF for use of their research

You can donate to our Airport Expansion campaign:
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