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Bristol Airport

Evaluating the case for expansion



Growth in aviation in the context of the Climate Change Commitment

- National Government is under pressure to meet it's Climate Change commitment to net zero carbon by 2050 - this includes international aviation and shipping emissions
- Aviation is set to be the biggest source of UK emissions by 2050, even with progress on technology and limiting demand (Committee on Climate Change (CCC), letter to UK Government, Sept 2019)
- CCC recommend growth in aviation should be limited to at most 25% above current levels
- Provision for expansion of Bristol Airport is not part of national planning on climate change, so current targets do not include proposed growth levels at Bristol Airport



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CPRE asked New Economics Foundation (NEF) to review the proposed expansion of Bristol Airport

- The wider economic case claimed by the airport; and
- How the proposals fit with the commitment by the UK Government to accept the recommendation by the Committee of Climate Change to adopt a target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050

What did the NEF analysis find?



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Expansion of Bristol airport is at odds with national Government projections for airport expansion

- NO expansion of Bristol Airport is factored into UK Department for Transport aviation sector model - manages overall future of UK aviation in relation to demand, flights, and carbon emissions.
- The model includes expansion of Heathrow Airport (now approved), and projects that this would reducing passenger demand at Bristol Airport by 1.0 million passengers in 2030.
- With or without Heathrow expansion DFT does not project Bristol's passenger demand to exceed the airport's current capacity of 10 million before 2030.
- Bristol Airport does not provide sufficient explanation to support their significantly more ambitious projections.



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Would the airport expansion be creating new/additional flights, or would these be ‘displaced’ from another airport? It depends..

- The airport’s ‘Assessment’ assumes TOTAL DISPLACEMENT OF CARBON COSTS, claiming all new flights from Bristol Airport would have otherwise left from another airport. Not having to include costs of extra carbon boots the business case in favour of the airport.
- However, when addressing the potential economic benefit of the airport expansion, it assumes the opposite - ZERO DISPLACEMENT - that all flights would be newly created, bringing a significant increased boost to figures in favour of expansion.
- Other airports in the South West are considerably under capacity.



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Unpacking the impacts on tourism

- NEF review concludes that the regional economic benefits for tourism have been significantly overstated.
- The methodology used is sound, but the ‘benchmark value’ used is for the UK as a whole, rather than using the regional benchmark (which is available).
- Tourist spending patterns vary considerably over the UK, and this leads to an overestimation of tourism spending by 1/3.
- NEF suggests following adjustments to the York Aviation proposed 2026 values for wider economic benefit:
 - North Somerset - reduce by £20 million (£90-£70 million)
 - West of England - reduce by £100 million (£210-£110 million)
 - South West and South Wales - reduce by £280 million (£390-£110)



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Overall NEF Conclusions

- Bristol Airport expansion is incompatible with net-zero commitments and the necessary transition towards a net-zero world, which is likely to include fiscal disincentives for flights
- Bristol Airport expansion is ‘out of sync’ with national demand forecasts
- The evidence supporting the ‘economic benefit’ of the airport is questionable, and in some places contradictory
- Full report available to download for free www.cpreavonside.org.uk

Committee on Climate Change recently wrote to the UK Government confirming that emissions reductions from aviation are essential. Offsetting (Green House Gas removal) while necessary, cannot be a substitute for emissions reductions.



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Next steps

- We believe that expansion of Bristol Airport has wider significance than for just North Somerset, and it should be considered in the context of the West of England, South West region, and national climate commitments.
- Government Inspectors for the JSP confirm that the Airport should be considered as part of the wider plan for this area.
- We urge North Somerset to reject this application.
- If it is approved, we have been assured that this decision will then be passed to the Secretary of State for consideration.
- CPRE will lobby at every stage of this process.



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