



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday 21 May 2008

Anti-airport expansion campaigners' arguments supported by government report

A government report published today saying that the government should completely rethink its aviation policy and shelve plans to expand airports has been strongly welcomed by campaigners opposing the expansion of Bristol airport.

The report, from the Government's own green watchdog, the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), published with the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR), has said that the Government must review its policy on expanding the UK's airports because there is so much controversy and conflict over issues such as the contribution of air travel to climate change and its benefits to the economy.

The SDC report concludes that the Government's 2003 Air Transport White Paper, which backs expansion at regional airports such as Bristol, must go back to the drawing board.

The SDC report 'Breaking the Holding Pattern' found that the evidence for airport expansion is heavily flawed over six key areas, in particular:

- accurately calculating the impact on the environment of rising aviation emissions
- the economic benefits of aviation in terms of wealth creation and the impact of tourists both leaving and entering the UK
- how much improvements in aircraft technology can really reduce CO2 emissions from air travel.

SBAE spokesperson Jeremy Birch said: "This report vindicates our arguments that the economic benefits claimed for airport expansion are not based on solid evidence and do not justify the damage to the climate from aviation emissions.

"At last government advisers are beginning to understand that expanding airports such as Bristol is adding to more money lost as people travel abroad than is brought in by foreign visitors. This growing tourist deficit is taking wealth out of the South West and needs to be included in the debate on BIA's expansion.

"A report published last week by the World Wildlife Fund also showed that 85% of FTSE-350 companies aim to cut staff flights in the next decade to save both time and money and reduce emissions, and they see videoconferencing as a key tool to enable this – which also slams the argument that business will benefit from more airport expansion."

SBAE's Hilary Burn also said: "Airlines are constantly promoting new improvements to reduce emissions but refuse to recognise that the sheer growth in numbers of flights cancel out the benefits of any new technology.

“Last week’s decision from North Somerset councillors calling for a full planning application for BIA’s proposed walkway is in line with today’s report highlighting the need for questions to be answered on airport expansion before further decisions can be made.”

The SDC report said: “While evidence informing these decisions is so widely contested, and the outcomes of important political decisions on addressing aviation’s climate impacts remain uncertain, we believe the risks of decisions in favour of expansion outweigh the possible benefits.”

Further information is available from Stop Bristol Airport Expansion at: www.stopbia.com

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For media enquiries and more information, contact Susan Pearson on: 07891 460942

Notes

1) SDC/IPPR report ‘Breaking the holding pattern’:http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/Breaking_the_holding_pattern_report.pdf
or exec summary
http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications/downloads/sdc_aviation_exec_summ1.pdf

2) WWF report ‘Travelling light’: www.wwf.org/travellinglight