



Immediate release: Friday 26 March

Heathrow Ruling Throws Bristol Airport Expansion into Doubt

Stop Bristol Airport Expansion welcomes High Court judgement

Stop Bristol Airport Expansion (SBAE) has welcomed a High Court Ruling today (Friday) which raises serious doubts about the expansion of Bristol Airport.

A High Court Judge has ruled that because the Government's 2003 aviation policy did not fully take into account the effects of climate change, it is not compatible with the Climate Change Act 2008 – effectively making the 2003 policy obsolete [1].

The government's 2003 policy has been used by North Somerset Council to set its own planning policies regarding the airport. Councillors are due to vote on Bristol Airport's expansion plans in the near future.

The judge, who was ruling on the Heathrow expansion, also said the impact of increased emissions from airport expansion was also likely to significantly affect the economic case.

SBAE spokesman Jeremy Birch said:

"We have always argued that the expansion of Bristol Airport made a nonsense of trying to tackle climate change and that the economic case was flawed. The judge stated that the economic case has changed radically since the 2003 White Paper, particularly due to the costs of climate change, and so it can no longer be used as the basis of policy, and should be fully revised and consulted upon.

"North Somerset Council must now reject the plans to expand Bristol Airport. The reasons giving by the judge for Heathrow are all equally valid in the case of Bristol Airport. Increased flights will increase climate changing emissions, altering the economic argument. On this basis, the airport expansion cannot go ahead until government policy has been thoroughly reviewed."

SBAE has consistently argued that expansion should not go ahead – and that any expansion should cap passenger numbers at 8 million until surface access improvements are made and until it is clear that climate change targets can be met.

The Climate Change Committee – an independent watchdog created by the act – recently advised the Government that around half of the planned airport expansion in the UK would have to be scrapped if the Government's own aviation emissions

target is to be met and that therefore it needed to review its 2003 aviation expansion policy.

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Notes:

[1] Ruling handed down at the Royal Courts of Justice by Lord Justice Carnwath on Friday 26 March in response to a Judicial Review of the decision to expand Heathrow, brought by Greenpeace and 12 other groups, including local councils, residents groups and other leading green groups. They argued that the consultation process which led to the decision to allow a 3rd runway at Heathrow to be built was fundamentally flawed and that the decision to expand Heathrow is at odds with the UK's overall climate change targets.

<http://www.bailii.org/ew/cases/EWHC/Admin/2010/626.html>