



Campaign against Climate Change Trade Union Group

WHY WORKERS SHOULD OPPOSE AVIATION EXPANSION

1 Aviation growth is incompatible with climate targets

We are facing a climate emergency which threatens our future and requires the UK to completely decarbonise its economy. Aviation contributes to that crisis, accounting for 7% of our greenhouse gas emissions. This impact is approximately doubled if 'non-CO2' effects are included such as water vapour at high altitude. Even without the push for airport expansion, this would make it impossible to achieve the zero carbon emissions target that is necessary.

But the government predicts that UK passenger traffic could soar from 284 million in 2017 to 435 million by 2050.

Improvements in aircraft efficiency and alternative fuels cannot make the reductions necessary. Carbon offsets rarely stand up to scrutiny. This means that any aviation expansion is a threat to the climate which won't provide the jobs we need for a safe future. Unions must push for new, greener

infrastructure, from wind turbines to bus and rail networks, to protect our livelihoods for the long term.

2 More jobs and better jobs are needed in other sectors

Some unions have welcomed Heathrow expansion on the basis that it will create jobs. But even those unions have found themselves organising strikes on behalf of workers to get the airport, which is almost entirely owned by overseas companies, to pay its cleaners, security and screening staff the London living wage. Instead our unions need to get behind a 'just transition' away from aviation towards secure, well paid, public sector jobs as part of a Green New Deal.

3 Inequity: the vast majority of those flying are rich

In the UK, 70% of flights are taken by only 15% of the population, whilst at least half the population do not fly at all. The vast majority of flights are made by the richest in society.

Expanding aviation will intensify inequality further and could exacerbate regional inequalities.

The sector enjoys significant tax breaks. It has been estimated that the tax exemption on aviation fuel costs the Exchequer well over £4 billion a year that could go towards struggling public services.

4 Local health and environmental impacts

In addition to global climate impacts meted out on the poorest, airport expansion is detrimental to the health of those living nearby. For example, the area around Heathrow already breaches legal limits for air pollution. Local councils warn that expansion of Heathrow will damage the health of around 121,000 people. Aircraft noise disrupts residents' daily living, sleep and children's learning. Air pollution exacerbates respiratory and cardiovascular conditions and leads to premature deaths. The problems caused by Heathrow expansion will be repeated for working class communities across the country with proposed regional airport expansion.

The alternative

Demand for high-carbon flights needs to be reduced, not encouraged. This could be done

through massive investment in affordable, nationalised rail alongside a shorter working week and expansion of annual leave allowances. This would allow people to be able to travel for holidays and leisure by rail. Action should be taken to limit business air travel and ensure no-fly solutions such as video-conferencing become the norm.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

We need jobs which are at the forefront of tackling the climate crisis, not those which contribute to it. The alternative to low pay and climate change is not bigger airports, but government investment in climate jobs, as outlined in the One Million Climate Jobs report. Instead, let's fight for jobs that give us a chance of a future for ourselves, our children and the planet

Find out more

This flyer raises a wide range of issues. References and further reading can be found at:

www.cacctu.org.uk/aviation

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