

Protest day against Bristol Airport expansion

Report by Alex Morss
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Campaigners plan to stage a protest day at Bristol Airport this Friday over proposals for expansion, which they say would mean a 59% rise in aviation carbon emissions this decade - at a time when local authorities have declared a climate emergency and pledged to reduce carbon by 50% by 2035.

Their action is in response to the airport's application for planning permission, which is open for consultation, until January 26.

The campaigners say the plans would mean the airport's greenhouse gas emissions increasing from previous (2017) levels of 746.77 to 1,183.87 kilo tonnes of CO₂ per year by 2026.

A Bristol spokesperson for the climate change campaign group, Extinction Rebellion, said: "Bristol Airport is trying to expand, accommodating 20 million passengers by 2040. This is a reckless decision, which is not congruent with the action necessary to safeguard our common future."

They say local authorities in the west of England have adopted targets that would otherwise equal or beat national Government targets on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Scientists have warned that the 400+ parts per million accumulation of atmospheric gases from burning fossil fuels are driving global warming beyond a critical and dangerous average level of 1.5C.

To meet the necessary reduction targets and avoid overshooting that 1.5C rise, there is an ambition by city leaders to reduce carbon emissions in the west of England by 20% by 2020; 50% by 2035; and by 80% by 2050. Bristol has become the first city to pledge to be carbon neutral by 2030.

Bristol and south west region campaigners are therefore asking people to object to the proposals before the deadline of January 26. Here is the link: bit.ly/2D5Q2rO

Extinction Rebellion Bristol have today announced on their Facebook page that their protest will include staging a 'die-in' at the airport this Friday, where large numbers of people will lie on the floor of the airport, hindering access, to represent the numbers of lives they say will be lost or shortened by climate change impacts. This event follows a series of protests throughout November and December by a network of Extinction Rebellion groups around the UK and more recently overseas too.

One campaigner, who asked not to be named, said: "The application is for growth to 12 million passengers per annum. Phase 1 of growth to 20 million passengers per annum. This is a 50% increase from 2017 when Bristol Airport reached 8 million, and will mean a throughput of 97,373 aircraft movements in a 12 month calendar period, a flight almost every three minutes."

The group claims: "Aviation carbon emissions at Bristol Airport in 2026 would increase by 59% compared to 2017 levels. This figure could well be higher if the modern, less-noisy fleet of aircraft does not materialise."

They also say Bristol Airport's plan to extend low cost car parking would undermine public transport, and add further to the airport's fossil fuel burden: "Public transport was only at 12.5% in 2017. This underscores the lack of ambition by the airport as it is in their interests to retain heavy car usage."

The group has estimated that 87.5% of passengers travel by car to and from the airport, which means more carbon emissions and lower standards of air quality: "The airport's strategy is one of 'business as usual' aimed at retaining high levels of car travel to fuel the airport's significant reliance and near monopoly on revenue from parking," added their spokesperson.

In 2017, Bristol Airport was the ninth busiest in the UK. Its carbon dioxide output from flights has previously been calculated to exceed that of an entire African country, according to the

campaign group Global Justice Now, and based on figures for the state of Malawi.

Bristol Airport expansion plans have garnered criticism from various campaign groups for the past 15 years, including Stop Bristol Airport Expansion, Friends of the Earth, the Green Party and the Campaign to Protect Rural England.

A spokesperson for North Somerset Green Party said: "It seems that the dire warnings from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPSS) last October have fallen on deaf ears at Bristol International Airport... Global aviation consumes an astonishing 5m barrels of oil every day, pumping 859 million tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere annually."

Defenders of the airport's expansions have argued that aviation accounts for only 2.5% of CO2 emissions currently.

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