



PRESS RELEASE

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INUIT LEADER SENDS MESSAGE TO NORTH SOMERSET COUNCILLORS

An Inuit leader has sent a personal appeal to North Somerset District Councillors, urging them to think about the effect on the global environment when they consider plans to expand Bristol International Airport later this year.

Aqqaluk Lyngø, a former Greenland MP and leader of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, asked councillors in North Somerset to consider whether expanding the airport was "really necessary."

In Britain to speak to MPs and give evidence to the Stansted Airport Public Inquiry, Mr Lyngø recorded a message to North Somerset councillors which is being sent to them on DVD.

In the message, he tells councillors that the Inuit are losing their traditional way of life with the hunting grounds provided by sea ice to the north of Greenland now no longer there.

"Your way of life is changing our way of life," Mr Lyngø said. "We are asking you to be responsible."

Bristol West MP Stephen Williams said:

"I heard Inuit leader Aqqaluk Lyngø when he spoke at Westminster. He gave a compelling account of how the developed world's insatiable lust for travel is damaging the fragile ecosystem of the Arctic. Personal testimony such as this brings alive the effect of climate change and makes me more determined to speak about the change in our behaviour that is necessary to halt the damage of our planet. We can't allow an unchecked expansion of air travel."

Bristol International Airport is expected to submit a planning application in September outlining its expansion plans. A "masterplan", has been drawn up by the airport, indicating passenger numbers will increase to 9 million by 2015. The Stop Bristol Airport Expansion campaign says that given the current rapid growth in passenger numbers, BIA is likely to exceed these figures by 2009.

Aviation is currently responsible for 6.5% of carbon dioxide emissions in the UK, but because of the added impact of emissions at high altitudes, is thought to be responsible for more than 13 % of the UK's global warming impact. Current plans for expansion at regional airports around the UK could double emissions by 2030, as well as increasing emissions from traffic, as more cars travel to regional airports along often busy country roads.

MPs on Friday urged the Government to include emissions from aviation in the UK's reduction targets, as set out in the draft Climate Change Bill [1].

Stop Bristol Airport Expansion spokesman Jeremy Birch said:

“We cannot ignore the global impacts of our actions here at home. I hope North Somerset District Councillors will listen to Aqqaluk Lynge’s message. Britain and the South West will not escape the climate impacts already being felt with such force in the Arctic. This year’s floods may be only a flavour of what is to come.”

ENDS

Pictures and more information from: Helen Burley, Stop Bristol Airport Expansion 07703 731923
The film can be viewed online at <http://www.stopbia.com/aqqaluk-lynge>

Notes:

[1] <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt200607/jtselect/jtclimate/170/170i.pdf>