



Response to Michael O'Leary's comments

Friday 12 October 2007

Michael O'Leary's comments are ridiculous and ill-informed – he has simply got his facts wrong. The Stop Bristol Airport Expansion campaign is made up of and represents a very widespread cross-section of the local community – from school children, students and grannies to professionals and local business people.

He should also take note that Swampy's campaigns were remarkably effective in changing the course of the Government's road building plans in the '90s. We expect that the tide of public opinion, and the concern over the threat of climate change will ensure that we are equally successful in fighting Bristol airport's expansion plans

The new flights unveiled by BIA and RyanAir are once again primarily holiday destinations, taking more money out of the South West – and not the business connections that BIA has assured the public is the basis for their plans.

BIA has repeatedly said that their growth is good for the local economy without ever backing up their statements with facts and figures. We have to balance the benefit of some jobs gained with the damage done to local communities and the environment. We need rigorous answers to rigorous questions - local people deserve to know the true facts.

Around only 20% of BIA's passengers are business travellers and we have to remember that businesses are now using every opportunity to cut their carbon footprint – including flying less!

Local planners must take into account the devastating impact of BIA's continued expansion on local communities and the climate change implications when considering BIA's imminent planning application.

Any environmental benefits gained from small technological improvements in aircraft are outstripped by the sheer (and increasing) numbers of planes - and climate change emissions released by aircraft cause twice the environmental damage as the same amount of CO₂ released at ground level.

Aviation is of huge concern in the UK because, according to Tyndall Centre scientists, at its present rate of growth, we would all have to stop emitting carbon dioxide from every other sector of the economy in order to meet our climate change targets.

Facts and figures

The Government acknowledges that CO₂ emissions from aviation account for 6.3% of the UK's total emission, and cause 13% of the UK's climate change damage. The 13% figure is reached from the acknowledgement that emissions from aviation are twice as damaging as emissions released at ground level because of an effect known as radiative forcing, in which the damaging effect of CO₂ and other gases is amplified at altitude.

These figures were confirmed by Gillian Merron, Aviation Minister, in response to a Parliamentary Question by Peter Ainsworth, in the Commons on 2 May 2007.

UK international aviation also produces more CO₂ than 7 of the EU27 countries put together (Malta, Latvia, Cyprus, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Slovenia, Estonia).

According to Defra, in 2004 the UK produced 33.45 million tonnes of CO₂ from international flights.