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PASSENGER NUMBERS SET TO HIT 7 MILLION NEXT YEAR

Emissions from airport now greater than some small countries.

Annual emissions from flights from Bristol International Airport will make a greater contribution to climate change than several entire nations, campaigners have warned, as the airport revealed that passenger numbers are expected to reach 7 million by next year [1].

Stop Bristol Airport Expansion said that the airport already exceeds the climate change emissions of developing nations such as the Gambia, Grenada and Chad, producing 0.43million tonnes of carbon dioxide a year (MtCO₂). With passenger numbers predicted to grow to 9 million emissions will rise to 0.73MtCO₂, exceeding the emissions of Mali, Cambodia and Greenland [2]. Campaigners say under current growth rates, the airport could reach this level by 2009.

BIA chief executive Paul Kehoe revealed yesterday (Wednesday) that plans to extend the airport will not now be submitted until 2008. But the chief executive said the number of flights at the airport would continue to increase, with 7 million passengers expected next year, and no current limit on future growth [3].

Campaigners said the impact of emissions from the airport was in fact far worse because of the extra damage caused by emitting greenhouse gases at high altitude [4].

SBAE climate campaigner Jeremy Birch said:

“The aviation industry keeps telling us that emissions from flights are not a problem, but Bristol Airport’s own figures reveal just how damaging they are. The UK already emits far more than its fair share of carbon – now we find that emissions from Bristol Airport alone are greater than several African countries combined. Many of these countries will suffer some of the harshest impacts of climate change – and yet they are powerless to tackle the growing impact of cheap flights.

“The airport cannot shirk its responsibilities in tackling climate change – more efficient aircraft will not make any difference if the number of flights keeps on growing. Bristol Airport cannot be allowed to carry on growing at this speed.”

Rising levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere are a key cause of climate change, with scientists warning that changes to the climate will put millions of people worldwide at risk of floods and drought, increasing disease, and affecting food supplies [5]. Here in the South West, more flooding and more storms are expected as the climate changes – putting thousands of homes at risk.

With new flights taking off from Bristol International Airport every month, emission levels are growing rapidly. According to the airport's own figures, passenger numbers are expected to reach 9 million by 2015, and campaigners say that at current rates this level could be reached by 2009.

National figures show that aviation is responsible for some 13 per cent of the UK's global warming impact [6]. People in the UK already fly on average more than people from any other large country, including the United States. Passenger flights from the UK produce an average of 603kg of CO₂ per person – more than twice the per capita emissions for France (243 kg) and Germany (214kg) [7].

Flying is the most carbon intensive form of travel – over a single 1500km journey, an aircraft emits twice as much greenhouse gas per passenger kilometre than a high speed train. Shorter journeys produce even higher emissions per kilometre.

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Notes:

[1] National emission totals taken from the US Energy Information Agency

<http://www.eia.doe.gov/pub/international/iealf/tableh1co2.xls>

Country	Emissions
Chad	0.19 MtCO ₂
Grenada	0.24 MtCO ₂
The Gambia	0.30 MtCO ₂
Burundi	0.41 MtCO ₂
Liberia	0.53 MtCO ₂
Cambodia	0.57 MtCO ₂
Mali	0.66 MtCO ₂

[2] BIA Masterplan, chapter 10

[3] Airport Consultative Committee, Wednesday 17th October 2007.

[4] Emissions at high altitude have a greater global warming impact because of radiative forcing – with IPCC scientists suggesting a multiplying factor of 1.9. See

<http://www.stopbia.co.uk/questions.php#impcc>

[5] See Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report, Working Group 2, April 2007, www.ipcc.ch

[6] Answer to Parliamentary Question 2 May 2007. This figure includes the greater damage done by aircraft emissions at high altitude (the radiative forcing effect). See

<http://www.aef.org.uk/downloads//CO2statementMay07.doc>

[7] TGI Greenvalues 2007 p7