



PRESS RELEASE

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Local tourism jobs lose out with airport growth

Thousands of jobs in the local tourism industry have been lost despite Bristol Airport's huge growth in recent years, a new report from Stop Bristol Airport Expansion has revealed.

The study, which for the first time compares tourism data for the South West with airport growth figures, shows that the soaring passenger numbers at Bristol Airport between 2001 and 2007 did not result in a boom for local tourism. In fact the tourism sector shrank by 10% in real terms. [1].

Report author Jeremy Birch said that given the figures in the study, there was no reason to think that BIA's proposed 60% expansion is likely to reverse this trend.

Jeremy Birch said:

"When you start looking closely at the data it's clear that many people who would have spent time and money in the South West have been flying abroad instead - and it's the South West tourism industry, one of the region's major employers, that's been losing out.

"There's no complicated maths in this study - the story is all there in the data from government and regional tourism agencies. It is very clear that expanding airports not only fails to boost regional tourism, but actually damages it.

While passenger numbers at BIA more than doubled – from 2.67 million in 2001 to 5.88 million in 2007 – the former Avon area lost 3,340 full-time jobs in tourism. In the same period, a staggering total of 44,761 full-time jobs in tourism were lost across the whole of the South West. Although the region's other airports also grew during this period, BIA is by far the largest, handling six times more passengers than Exeter.

All data used in the study comes from public sources such as the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), South West Tourism and the UK Tourism Survey for the SW. [2]

Jeremy Birch added:

"Bristol airport has claimed huge economic benefits from incoming tourism for its planned expansion but the pattern so far has been in the opposite direction. Those hoping for the airport's expansion to boost local tourism should reconsider in the light of our findings."

The study shows that the majority of BIA's passengers, 85%, are travelling to and from the South West, while 49.6% of BIA's passengers come from the former Avon area, with 11.9% of these from Somerset. This indicates that BIA's catchment area is mainly local.

Between 2001 and 2007, day trips within the South West fell from 148 million to 96 million, a drop of 36% [3]. Most day trips are likely to be made by people resident in the South West, suggesting that as people use BIA more, they spend less on day trips. The study indicates that

the rise in outbound tourism is the most likely cause for the diversion of spending on trips that would otherwise fuel jobs in South West tourism.

And as passenger numbers have dropped in 2009, local tourist attractions in North Somerset have reported a 10% increase in visitors.

The study also shows that including day trips, 86% of tourism spending in the region is by UK citizens. Most of these arrive by car and almost none by plane. Overseas visitors to the South West generate only a small amount, 14%, of the South West's tourism income. Only 15% of the total overseas visitors reach the South West through BIA.

Although inbound passengers using BIA have increased from 80,000 trips to 300,000 trips over this period, this is still less than one in seven of the foreign tourists who visit the South West each year. BIA is not a very significant way of bringing money into the region; but it is a very effective way of sending money out.

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Notes

[1] 'Tourism, its impacts and the relevance of Bristol International Airport' – see http://www.stopbia.com/files/sw_tourism.pdf

[2] Main data sources (all figures used are from public sources):

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) annual passenger numbers for BIA (www.caa.co.uk)

CAA Passenger surveys covering BIA for years 2000,2003,2008

South West Tourism "Value of Tourism" reports for years 2001,2003,2005,2006,2007 (no others available) (from www.visitsouthwest.co.uk or www.swtourism.org.uk)

United Kingdom Tourism Survey for South West (www.swtourism.org.uk)

International Passenger Survey (www.ons.gov.uk)

State of Tourism report 2003 (<http://towards2015.co.uk/downloads/StateofTourism.pdf>)

SW occupancy rates data (www.swtourism.org.uk)

[3] In 2007, day visitors to the former Avon area contributed £743million; in 2001 day visitors to Avon spent £700million, equivalent to £798million in 2007 prices (using RPI measure of inflation for adjustment).

In 2007, day visitors to the South West spent £4.2billion; in 2001 they spent £3.77 billion, equivalent to £4.3billion in 2007 prices.

[4] Report summary:

The following points show there is strong evidence that previous expansion at BIA has meant lower domestic tourism income and has only partly compensated for this by bringing inbound tourists. Future expansion would continue this pattern, taking money away from the South West tourism, leisure and other sectors.

- *Between 2001 and 2007, the tourism income to the South West region fell by 10% in real terms. At the same time the UK GDP grew by 16%, thus the sector fell behind the rest of the economy by 25%*
- *The number of tourism related direct jobs in the South West dropped by 14.6%, a loss of 44,761 full-time jobs*
- *For the former Avon area the drop was 11.4%, a loss of 3,340 full-time jobs*
- *Over the same period the passengers at BIA doubled, with over 60% outbound tourists*

and only 10% inbound tourists

- *Over 80% of tourism trips and 82% of spending from stays in the region are domestic*
- *Including day trips, 86% of tourism spend in the region is by UK citizens*
- *For domestic visitors, over 80% arrive by car and only 2.4% by plane*
- *Of the visitors that are from abroad, only 15% reach the region through BIA, most use airports in the South East or surface transport*
- *The currently weak pound has increased outbound costs and decreased inbound ones, but overall this has reduced total passenger numbers*
- *In 2009, when air passengers have fallen by 10%, attraction visitor numbers and incomes are up 10% in North Somerset, and up generally across the country*
- *Overseas inbound tourists generate a tiny fraction of the tourism income of the South West.*