Ask your MP to oppose third runway at Heathrow

Activity begins: 13th June 2018
Activity finishes: By end of June 2018

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Campaign Summary
On the 5th June the Government announced that it was going to back the construction of a third runway at Heathrow and submit it to a vote in Parliament later in the month.

When built this new runway will by itself load the atmosphere with as much extra carbon as some entire countries pump out and make it very hard for the UK to meet its CO2 emissions reduction in order to combat climate change. Indeed the former Government chief scientist David King has said that if the UK wants to meet its climate targets then the third runway will have to become a white elephant.

The increase in road traffic around the airport - the main source of pollution around Heathrow - will also further contribute to making Londoners’ air more dangerous to breathe at a time when an air pollution crisis is already cutting short thousands of lives. So far there has been no meaningful explanation on how this increase in emissions will dealt with either by Heathrow or the Government.

It is estimated that by 2030 the new runway will affect 92,000 more people with noise pollution. It’s possible this number will fall as quieter planes are introduced, but this will have little impact on the ground as it is the sheer volume of aircrafts that causes the real annoyance problem.

In addition the third runway will require the demolition of around 800 homes, destroying communities which have already had to deal with the impact of living next to one of the world’s busiest airports. Heathrow has said they will buy these and a further 3,000 homes affected by the noise from the flight path at pre-blighted value, plus 25%, plus cost of removal and stamp duty. This has divided the community with some people willing to take the offer and others not wishing to lose their homes and see their communities destroyed.

It is anticipated that the Conservatives will whip (put pressure on their MPs) to vote in favour of expansion, although there could be some who defy it and vote against - and some Ministers like Boris Johnson will be allowed to abstain from the vote because their constituents don’t want a 3rd runway. The DUP will also vote with the Government.

Both the Liberal Democrats and Greens are strongly opposed.

The Labour Party have set four tests which the third runway has to meet as a condition of their support. Analysis shows the runway fails to meet these tests, and it’s looking likely Jeremy Corbyn may confirm Labour’s opposition to this project on those grounds. However, this has not yet been confirmed, and even if it is, Labour MPs may have a free vote and some (potentially up to 100) might still be minded to vote in favour of the runway.
The SNP have in the past been in favour of expansion as they believe it provides a gateway for Scottish freight to the rest of the world, and makes them look pro-business. However some of their MPs have started to question the policy a bit more as guarantees to Scotland - in terms of ensuring regional flights - are not particularly clear. It is now being speculated that the SNP may decide to abstain and whip accordingly, especially as we understand that they haven’t voted with the Tories since 1979. Recent Brexit-related controversies between the SNP and Government may also influence their decision to abstain.

**What we would like you to do**

We want to use this uncertainty in both the Labour and SNP parties to get their MPs to vote against or abstain thus reducing the Government’s margin of victory and even possibly making them lose the vote.

There is also a handful of Tories that we believe could rebel and vote against the Government. Although the priority is Labour and SNP and some Conservative MPs, we would like as many MPs as possible to be contacted. The aim is to make this upcoming vote as controversial as possible and show all our politicians that there is lots of opposition to the idea of Heathrow expansion - especially on the grounds of climate change, air pollution and noise pollution. This will help support our efforts to continue opposing aviation expansion in the future.

This is where you come in. We need to let MPs know that in the eyes of their constituents they cannot be serious on climate change and vote for Heathrow.

We would like you to carry out one or more of the following activities:

**Write an email or letter:** See guidelines below and remember to make it as personal as possible.

**Visit your MP at constituency meeting:** Ideally we would like you to visit your MP as part of their constituency meetings. While MPs might receive lots of letters about the campaign, what will really make the message stand out is if they can meet constituents face to face to hear more about it. You’ll be speaking to your MP as a local constituent, but with the knowledge that you’re also spreading the word on behalf of hundreds of others in your area, and thousands across the UK.

We believe this will be more impactful if you go as a local constituent and don’t say that you are meeting them on behalf of Greenpeace.

You can find a full guide on arranging a meeting with your MP as part of this briefing.

We don’t think there is much to be gained by having debates with your MPs about why the third runway is or isn’t a good idea and are therefore not going to ask you to try and convince them to take our position. For this reason we are not providing you with an in-depth technical briefing but some simple talking points.
What to say to your MP about the campaign

The issue:

- The UK government has decided to go ahead with the construction of a third runway at Heathrow airport for which there will be a vote in the House of Commons at some point in late June - or at latest, early July.
- The increased air and noise pollution will impact not only local residences but Londoners and others in the surrounding Home Counties.
- The third runway will require the demolition of 800 homes and destroy communities in the local area by forcing residents to move.
- Should the runway go ahead, it will be incredibly hard for the UK to meet its CO2 reductions targets to combat climate change.
- You can either be committed to tackling climate change or you can be committed to Heathrow expansion. You cannot do both.
- If SNP MP: The benefits to Scotland - in terms of regional connectivity - are not particularly clear and although Scotland won’t be affected as much by the pollution issues, climate change is global and will impact Scots. Voting for this will undermine Scotland’s leadership so far on climate. Does the SNP really want to vote with the Tories for the first time in almost 4 decades on such an issue?

Climate change:

- The Airports Commission found that one new runway could be built without breaching the Committee on Climate Change’s target that CO2 from emissions from UK aviation should be down to 2005 levels by 2050, i.e. should not exceed 37.5MtCO2.
- That is already a generous cap as it would mean that aviation represented around 25% of all allowable UK CO2 by that date, and that other sectors would have to make deeper cuts of around 85% by 2050 from 1990 levels.
- The Government has yet to update its climate targets to align them with limiting warming to 1.5ºC as per the Paris Agreement.
- In order to meet this target no further expansion would be possible at another UK airport.
- The former Government chief scientist David King has said that for UK to be climate compatible Heathrow 3rd runway would become a white elephant.

Air pollution:

- No indication has been given as to how the air pollution that will be created by the additional road traffic will be managed.
- Despite what Heathrow claim, controlling air pollution will be largely out of their control as it will mainly depend on the introduction of cleaner cars and new rail infrastructure.
- At present there are no guarantees from Government or industry that cleaner vehicles or new railways will be in place when the runway opens in 2025.
- A third runway would create an unacceptable ‘high’ risk of failing the government’s tests on complying with legal obligations (and harming people’s health and shortening their lives) – and that risk is at odds with a High Court ruling that meeting legal obligations must be likely not just possible.

Noise:

- The latest Government figures indicate that 92,000 more people would be affected by aircraft noise in 2030.
- It’s possible the number will fall by 2050 as quieter planes are introduced. But quieter planes will not have the impact on the ground the Government is claiming as it is the sheer volume of
aircraft that causes the real annoyance problems. A third runway would mean 700 extra planes a day using Heathrow.

- Some of the noise problems could be mitigated through more respite (using and rotating multiple flight paths) and a tougher regime on night flights but noise is likely to remain an intractable problem that cannot be adequately minimized or mitigated.

**Communities’ destruction:**

- A third runway would require the demolition of around 800 homes.
- Heathrow has said it would be prepared to buy up around another 3,000 homes where the noise from a new flight path might be unbearable. That is not going to cover everyone affected by the increase in air traffic.
- Everybody would be offered the pre-blighted cost of their home, plus 25%, plus cost of removal and any stamp duty paid.
- Heathrow’s offer to buy homes at pre-blighted value, plus 25%, plus cost of removal and stamp duty has divided the community. Some people are prepared to accept the offer but others don’t want to lose their homes and see their communities destroyed.

**What do we want?**

- For MPs to decide if they want to support action on climate change and air pollution, or more flights that benefit the minority.
- Vote against the Third runway.

Good luck, thank you and if you have any questions please email Lowri.evans@greenpeace.org
ANNEX 1: How to attend MP constituency meeting
1. Book a meeting by contacting your constituency office by phone or email. Look up your MPs constituency contact details here. Because time is of the essence here we strongly encourage you to phone them. Some MPs operate drop in sessions where you don’t need to book. Fridays are good days to try and meet your MP, but many will run surgeries on Saturdays too.

2. Let us know you’ve got a meeting by emailing lowri.evans@greenpeace.org

3. Make sure you’re ready - meetings tend to last about 15 minutes so it’s well worth spending a bit of time to make sure you’re clear about what you are going to say and what you want your MP to do.

4. Go to your meeting. Please be polite and respectful to your MP and their team. Remember that you are not visiting them on behalf of Greenpeace.

5. Please report back to us on your experience. This will allow us to feedback to the campaigns team about the response from MPs. Most importantly, this will ensure that we can keep track of every MP who supports the campaign.
ANNEX 2: Sample letter or email

Because we want your letter or email to be as personal as possible we’re not providing you with a template but invite you to use the bullet points from the What to say to your MP section.

You will see that the list of bullet points below is quite long. We suggest you try to pick out the key points that resonate the most with you in each section, and try to summarise each area that you want to raise as briefly as possible.

Here is a suggestion of how you could top and tail your letter, followed by bullet points on the issue itself to go in the middle section of the letter:

Dear XXX MP,

I am contacting you today about the upcoming Parliamentary vote for the proposed third runway at Heathrow airport. I would like you to oppose expansion of Heathrow on my behalf.

……

As you can see from the issues above, a third runway at Heathrow is not compatible with tackling climate change, air pollution or noise pollution. It would also have huge negative impacts for local communities. I feel passionately that the UK must take responsibility in dealing with climate change. We can’t allow this polluting industry to keep expanding. Please will you vote against Heathrow expansion.

Yours sincerely,

Xxxx

Bullet points to select/ distil for the middle section of the letter:

As well as explaining about the campaign, and reiterating your request at the end of the letter, here are some questions that will help you to personalise your letter, and select from the bullet points below.

- Why do you oppose Heathrow expansion?
- Why do you think your MP should vote against the third runway?
- Has your MP spoken about aviation or Heathrow expansion before (you can look it up here)?
- Why do you think it’s important that we act now?

If you’d like to take part in similar activities in the future, please join the ‘Political Lobbying Network - UK Wide’ Greenwire group. It would also be great to hear what your MP says in response. Post a shout on the group page or email lowri.evans@greenpeace.org.