

On July 24th, 2015,

## Air Quality - Letter to Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister,

As you know, air quality is a huge cause of public concern, particularly in London. The associated health and environmental challenges are becoming clearer by the day. Last week a new report from academics at Kings College London estimated that the equivalent of up to 10,000 deaths in the capital are brought forward every year as a result of air pollution. This figure is expected to be 80,000 equivalent deaths across the UK.

Tackling air pollution has always been central to airport expansion. When the last Government gave the green light to expansion at Heathrow in 2009 it did so conditionally on the basis of assumptions about improvement to air quality around the airport. Six years on, assumptions about cleaner technologies bringing about rapid improvement in air quality have proved wrong. Air pollution remains a serious challenge at Heathrow. There is now a real danger of history repeating itself.

The recent Airport Commission Report once again recommended expansion at Heathrow. We believe that the problem of air quality has not been taken seriously enough by the Commission and are concerned that they made their recommendation after undertaking a flawed consultation on the issue.

Sir Howard Davies announced an exceptional consultation on air quality on 8 May – the day after the election. The consultation concluded on 29 May giving interested parties just 13 working days to respond to highly detailed technical reports, spatial maps and data spreadsheets as well as to interpret the Commission's own complex methodology on receptor locations for example.

The Commission published a report on 1 July 'Consideration of Air Quality Consultation Responses'. It is however clear that limited further work was done to respond substantively to points submitted during this exceptional consultation. Given the Commission timetable and the fact their main 350 page Report was published just a month after the air quality consultation ended it is clear that the Commission effectively regarded it as a tick box exercise and one that was immaterial to the overall report.

Air pollution at Heathrow is already above the legal limit. It is hard to see how a third runway with millions more car and lorry journeys to the airport will improve air quality around West London. It will obviously make it worse. In doing so it will also raise the legal bar for expansion ever getting the green light

As the Commission's own report states 'Limits on air quality are enshrined in domestic and European legal frameworks. Delivery of any scheme would be dependent on compliance with those frameworks.' Following the Supreme Court Ruling earlier this year the Government is required to publish a plan by the end of 2015 detailing how it will ensure the UK is compliant with nitrogen dioxide limits. It is hard to see how expansion at Heathrow can be consistent with that.

In our view this issue is too important simply to wish away. Either the consultation process should be reopened so the views of the millions of people potentially affected can be properly considered or – preferably – the Government should rule out expansion at Heathrow given the huge environmental and health impacts it would cause.

We thank you for your consideration and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

- Councillor Ray Puddifoot, Leader, London Borough Hillingdon
  - Councillor Ravi Govindia, Leader, of London Borough of Wandsworth
  - Lord True, Leader, London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
  - Councillor Stephen Cowan, Leader, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham
  - Councillor Kevin Davies, Leader, Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames
  - Councillor Ruth Dombey, Leader, London Borough of Sutton
  - Zac Goldsmith MP
  - Tania Mathias MP
  - John McDonnell MP
  - Ruth Cadbury MP
  - Bob Blackman MP
  - Kate Hoey MP
  - Adam Afriyie MP
  - Andy Slaughter MP
  - Baroness Kramer
  - Baroness Hamwee
  - John Sauven, Executive Director, Greenpeace UK
  - Craig Bennett, CEO, Friends of the Earth
  - Jonathan Steel, CEO, Change London
  - Alistair Wardrope, Coordinator of Healthy Planet UK
  - Eleanor Dow, Deputy Coordinator of Healthy Planet UK
  - Stephen Joseph, Chief Executive, Campaign for Better Transport
  - Professor Frank Kelly, Head of the Environmental Research Group, King's College London
  - Clean Air in London
  - Shazia Ali-Webber, I Like Clean Air
  - Andrew Wood, Network for Clean Air
  - Tim Johnson, Director, Aviation Environment Federation
  - John Stewart, Chair, HACAN
  - Peter Willan, Chair, Richmond Heathrow Campaign
  - Teddington Action Group
  - Caroline Pidgeon, Leader of the Liberal Democrat London Assembly Group, Deputy Chair of the London Assembly's Transport Committee
  - Stephen Knight, Liberal Democrat Environment Spokesperson on the London Assembly
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