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For immediate use

Government “squandered opportunity” to abandon Heathrow expansion

The Government have decided not to review the Airports National Policy Statement (ANPS), which enables Heathrow expansion, in a move described by the biggest campaign group fighting the proposals as “illogical” and “disappointing”.

The Department for Transport’s announcement (1) seeks to justify its position by stating that although changes to legislation since Parliament passed the ANPS in 2018 (such as adoption of net zero emissions in 2019 and subsequent acceleration of carbon targets) “represent a significant and unforeseen change in circumstances that was not anticipated at the time of designation of the ANPS”, it is “not possible to conclude properly that any of the policy set out in the ANPS would have been materially different had these circumstances been anticipated at the time of designation.”

On air quality, the Government felt it would not be appropriate to review the ANPS while the final stages of the Environment Bill, which creates “two new air quality targets in legislation” on air quality – is due to be examined at report stage in the House of Lords later this week (2).

The Government also announced that they would be withdrawing the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise at the end of September (3).

The news comes on the same week that a government consultation proposes to reduce emissions in aviation, to achieve net zero by 2050, in line with climate change targets (4). However, campaigners believe that too great a reliance is placed on technologies which are either in their infancy or simply do not exist – far from able to operate on even short haul commercial flights, let alone long-haul routes. Next week a consultation on Sustainable Aviation Fuels will close (5).

Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, said:

“How disappointing that the Government has squandered this opportunity to abandon Heathrow expansion, once and for all. And how illogical. They claim to recognise that their carbon policy represents significant changes of circumstances that couldn’t have been foreseen when the project was approved yet seem unwilling to recognise the consequences of these significant changes – even as their own Climate Change Committee advises that there can now be no net expansion of UK aviation.

“Can the Government really be hoping that the aviation industry led Jet Zero Consultation will pull rabbits out of a hat, with “Sustainable Aviation Fuels” and “Zero

Emission Aircraft”, although these can be little more than pipe dreams for the next half century?

“On the day when the Government announced that they’ll also be closing the first and only real attempt to provide a forum for the voice of overflowed communities, it seems that the consequences of both aviation and their own climate policies are being overlooked”.

ENDS.

Notes:

1.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1015207/decision-on-requests-to-review-the-anps.pdf

2. <https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-statements/detail/2021-09-06/hcws251>

3. <https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2021/june/lords-debates-environment-bill2/>

4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/achieving-net-zero-aviation-by-2050>

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/mandating-the-use-of-sustainable-aviation-fuels-in-the-uk>