

PRESS RELEASE

20 APRIL 2021

For immediate use

GOVERNMENT EFFECTIVELY KILLS HEATHROW EXPANSION

Heathrow expansion is now near impossible to deliver following the Government's declaration that it will include emissions from aviation in the UK's sixth carbon budget which has a legally binding target to cut emissions by 78% by 2035 **(1)**.

Heathrow is already the single biggest source of carbon emissions in the UK, emitting 20 megatonnes of CO₂ per year, around 60% of total UK aviation emissions. The CCC's Balanced Pathway to net zero anticipates that the aviation sector will still be emitting 23MtCO₂ in 2050. A third runway would increase the airport's emissions to 27 megatonnes of CO₂ per year **(2)**.

This would mean that in order to meet the new target, most other airports around the UK would have to close, with perhaps just one or two small airports operating alongside an expanded Heathrow. Additionally, the CCC advises that sustainable aviation fuels will contribute a maximum of 25% of liquid fuel consumed in 2050 **(3)**.

The news follows advice from the Climate Change Committee (CCC) – the Government's statutory advisers on climate change – advised in December 2020 that in order to meet the 2050 Net Zero emissions target, aviation emissions would need to be included in the "Sixth Carbon Budget" and that there would need to be no aggregate expansion of UK aviation **(see 2)**. It would mean that an expansion at one centre of aviation would require a contraction elsewhere. In other words, were more aviation activity to occur at Heathrow, there would need to be restrictions at regional airports.

Since that advice was given, there has been a further tightening. First, the Government announced that it would meet 68% of the reductions by 2030 **(4)**. Second, the CCC determined that in order to meet the Net Zero target, 78% of the reductions would need to be achieved by 2035. And that, for it to have any chance of materialising, this acceleration of reductions, plans to achieve this would need to be enshrined by June 2021 **(5)**.

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

"Heathrow expansion is simply not compatible with the UK Government's commitment to do our part in protecting the climate."

"With aviation now having to live within carbon emissions limits, and the Government's position being that there can be no net expansion of UK aviation, the expansion of activity at one airport will need to be offset by the restriction of activity at another."

"So, supporters of Heathrow expansion will need to identify which regional airports in other parts of the UK they would like to see restricted – or closed – to allow for a greater"

concentration of the UK's aviation at Heathrow, in the already economically advantaged South East. But I don't think it's likely that anyone, other than Heathrow's foreign based shareholders, will be foolish enough to advocate for a relegation of economic opportunity in the regions, and an abandonment of the government's levelling-up agenda."

ENDS.

Notes for editors:

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-enshrines-new-target-in-law-to-slash-emissions-by-78-by-2035>
2. Climate Change Committee: 6th Carbon budget – Aviation
<https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Sector-summary-Aviation.pdf> p. 11
3. <https://www.theccc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Sector-summary-Aviation.pdf> p. 21
4. This news comes only days after the Government [announced](#) a new “[nationally determined contribution](#)” ((NDC) for 2030 – its pledge for achieving the goals of the [Paris Agreement](#), following advice from the CCC). A new plan aims for at least 68% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by the end of the decade, compared to 1990 levels <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-sets-ambitious-new-climate-target-ahead-of-un-summit>
5. The [Climate Change Act](#), originally established in 2008, requires the UK government to set carbon budgets to act as “[stepping stones](#)” towards the 2050 emissions target <https://www.theccc.org.uk/about/our-expertise/advice-on-reducing-the-uks-emissions/#:~:text=The%20Climate%20Change%20Act%20requires,over%20a%20five%2Dyear%20period.&text=The%20Committee%20will%20advise%20on%20the%20Sixth%20Carbon%20Budget%20in%20December%202020>.