

Press Release

7 September 2017

For Immediate Use

Government accused of bias during consultation by Independent adviser it appointed, as further consultations are announced

The Department for Transport has been accused of publishing biased propaganda in the consultation on Heathrow Airport expansion (known as the Airports National Policy Statement), which it conducted earlier this year (13th February – 15th March 2017), at twenty locations acknowledged to be already adversely impacted by aircraft noise.

The admission appeared in a report (1) by Sir Jeremy Sullivan, who had been appointed as "Independent Adviser to the Consultation". Although written in July, it was only published by the DfT on 7 September 2017. In the report, Sir Jeremy Sullivan accuses the DfT of having fallen "short of best practice" in publishing "pro-Heathrow propaganda" in a material issued by the DfT to over a million residents, in place of vital information such as the full address of consultation venues (2). Sullivan also goes on to describe the materials as "giving an impression of a hard-sell for Heathrow" and that "it would have been much better if a more neutral leaflet had been distributed."

The DfT claim to have learned from these shortcomings (3). However, it is unclear whether similar materials will be used in the further consultation events.

Zac Goldsmith, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Heathrow Expansion (and Conservative MP for Richmond Park) said: "Residents already knew that the consultation was profoundly flawed and are not surprised that those shortcomings have finally been acknowledged by the DfT. But in truth, it doesn't matter how many consultations are conducted; for as long as the DfT and Heathrow refuse to reveal where the new flight paths will be, these consultations are less than worthless."

Ruth Cadbury, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Heathrow Expansion (and Labour MP for Brentford & Isleworth) said: Yet again, another so-called consultation from the Government on Heathrow that amounts to nothing more than a cynical PR exercise. Those who did manage to find when and where the consultation events were, did not get answers they needed to give an informed response and whether their lives would be subject to endless noise from Heathrow."

In the written statement to Parliament on Thursday (7 September), Transport Secretary Chris Grayling stated that a further period of consultation was now required, to consider the government's updated air quality plan and updated passenger demand forecasts. Sir Jeremy Sullivan has recommended this period of consultation should last for "no less" than eight weeks.

Press Release

The Government had been required to update its Air Quality Plan by the courts, further to the Client Earth's November 2016 legal victory, in which the government's plan had been held to be inadequate (4).

With other legal actions in the pipeline (5), and Labour's support for Heathrow being questioned (6), doubts arising as to whether yet further delays to the process can be avoided.

Rob Barnstone, Campaign coordinator for the No Third Runway Coalition (7), said: *"Despite assurances to the contrary, this additional element of scrutiny might well result in yet further delays to the plan to expand this already highly disruptive airport over the UK's most densely populated residential region. It may well represent the first steps of the preparation for a Government climb-down, as they recognise the difficulties in getting Heathrow expansion through Parliament."*

Ends

Notes for editors:

1. The report is entitled "Report of the Independent Consultation Adviser to the Secretary of State for Transport: consultation on the draft Airports National Policy Statement"
2. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642739/independent-consultation-advisor-draft-airports-national-policy-statement.pdf, para 49.
3. <http://www.civilserviceworld.com/articles/news/dft-criticised-'inadequate'-heathrow-expansion-pamphlet>
4. <https://www.clientearth.org/major-victory-health-uk-high-court-government-inaction-air-pollution/>
5. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-38015348>
6. <https://www.ft.com/content/a704e8c6-8590-11e7-bf50-e1c239b45787>
7. the No 3rd Runway Coalition is a Coalition of Councils, Members of Parliament, local politicians and resident groups, opposing the expansion of Heathrow. See: www.no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk/

Press Release



www.no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk