

## **The Climate Camp ‘changed the whole terms of the debate’**



[“Climate Camp was the best thing that could have happened. It was just so successful and I think has changed the whole terms of the debate”.](#) John McDonnell MP

The Government was taken aback by the success and impact of the Climate Camp, staged near Heathrow towards the end of August. Within days of the camp ending, civil servants from the Department for Transport were on the phone to the chief executives of the national environmental organisations inviting them to an urgent meeting with Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly to discuss aviation policy. The Government – and an increasingly sympathetic media – were surprised at the range of support the camp attracted. Local people, direct action activists, environmentalists all went to the camp. As did the local MP John McDonnell and senior Liberal Democrats Susan Kramer and Vincent Cable. Its many workshops were addressed by well-known figures such as the journalist George Monbiot and the Director of Friends of the Earth, Tony Juniper. A number of journalists, who went underground to try and dig dirt on the camp, admitted that they changed their minds when they saw at first hand the seriousness of the camp and of the climate change message it was trying to get across.

## Party Conferences



**World Development Movement, a member of AirportWatch, drew attention to Climate Change outside the Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth**

### **Ruth Kelly Parrots Industry Line**

The Transport Secretary Ruth Kelly's defence of the Government's expansionist aviation policies at the Labour Party Conference could have come straight from the aviation industry. She argued that expansion (and specifically the expansion of Heathrow) was necessary for the health of the economy. She refused to countenance higher taxes because it might limit the number of flights working families could afford. She argued that aviation shouldn't be singled out as a special contributor to climate change. And she defended Emissions Trading as the way forward.

### **Susan Kramer Proposes Taxes to Help Rail**

The Liberal Democrat Transport Spokesperson Susan Kramer confirmed the Liberal Democrat policy of no new runways in the South East. But the party went further and announced that taxes on planes and heavy lorries would be used to develop rail, including high-speed rail systems, to give people more viable alternatives to air travel. Susan Kramer also expressed her personal unease about the expansionist plans for Birmingham Airport.

### **Conservatives: Moratorium on Airport Expansion?**

The Conservative's Quality of Life Commission has recommended a moratorium on airport expansion. Within the context of a moratorium, it recommended ruling out expansion at Stansted and Gatwick airports and reviewing plans for a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway at Heathrow. It also endorsed the idea of 'eco-taxes' – where increased taxes on polluting activities such as flying are off-set by tax reductions elsewhere. The Conservative's final policy on aviation has yet to be drawn up. There is still pressure from people like John Redwood, who chaired the party's commission on economic development, to expand airports.

## Aviation Fringe Meetings

Greenpeace organised two lively fringe meetings at the Labour and Liberal Democrat conferences (the Conservative's takes place this week). The panel consisted of environmentalists, Eurostar, as well as representatives of the aviation industry. As a result lively debates ensued.

### The Party Conferences – a personal impression

*I'm going to Blackpool tomorrow to the Conservative Conference. It will be interesting as the party seems to be genuinely trying to move in a new, greener direction on aviation. Certainly over the last year or two there has been a willingness to listen to voices calling for limits to the growth of aviation – a number of AirportWatch people were invited to sit on the Quality of Life Commission. The Lib Dem and Labour conferences couldn't have been more different from each other as far as aviation was concerned. At the Greenpeace aviation fringe at the Lib Dems, Michelle di Leo, the representative of Flying Matters, the industry-dominated pro-expansion pressure group, could not have been more isolated. The delegates in the audience and Susan Kramer, speaking from the platform, were quite clear that expansion was not the way forward. At Labour, the party hierarchy and, it appeared much of the membership (if they though much about aviation at all), were happy to go unthinkingly down the industry line. Perhaps aviation has become a 'tribal' thing for the mainstream of the Labour Party. The Tories and Lib Dems are seen as attacking the right of working families to fly. Therefore Labour almost instinctively defends that right. Perhaps many of the delegates are the very people who are able to fly more than they did before. And this blinds them to thinking both about the downsides of aviation expansion - climate change; noise; community and habitat destruction – and whether it serves any useful economic purpose. Ruth Kelly, the Transport Secretary of State, is more open-minded than that. In person, she came across as lively, intelligent and approachable. But at the moment she is just listening to the voices of the aviation industry and their bedfellows, the civil servants in her aviation department. Whatever the reason, it does seem that we have an uphill struggle to persuade the mainstream of the Labour Party of our case by argument alone.*

**John Stewart**

### 27<sup>th</sup> October: AirportWatch Conference

There are still places available at the AirportWatch Conference being held close to Kings Cross on 27<sup>th</sup> October. This year the focus will be on noise, but will also include sessions on building up and developing local campaigns.

If would like to come or want more details contact Sarah – [sarah@airportwatch.org.uk](mailto:sarah@airportwatch.org.uk)

## Birmingham Second Runway Dropped

.....but '*residents can't sleep easy yet*'.

Birmingham Airport anti-Noise Group (BANG) has welcomed the announcement by Birmingham International Airport (BIA) that proposals for a second runway at the airport have been dropped, but BANG said that local people living in the shadow of the airport should not be misled by claims that the plan to extend the existing runway by 2012 represents an environmentally friendly alternative.

In an announcement last month, the airport authorities revealed that 'updated traffic forecasts now indicate that a second runway should not be needed before 2030 and the Airport is being planned on that basis', but that 'priority [will be] given to an extension to the main runway, which could be open before 2012'. A third passenger terminal is also proposed, with the first phase of construction scheduled for 2018. The airport authorities argue that the longer runway will enable Birmingham to take bigger planes which will provide direct flights to the developing economies of the Far East.

Secretary of BANG James Botham said: "We welcome the announcement by the airport company that the second runway had been indefinitely postponed, but residents near BIA and under the flight path cannot sleep easy yet. The environmental impact of the airport is still set to increase over the next twenty-three years, if the plans summarised in today's Interim Statement are brought to fruition. What's more, many more people will find themselves affected who previously were spared the misery of aircraft noise pollution."

**BANG, which represents local people affected by aircraft noise pollution and blight from the airport, is concerned that operating a longer runway will mean:**

- closer and lower flights over residential areas;
- more people over a much wider area exposed to aircraft noise pollution;
- scrapping operational measures designed to mitigate noise. For example, with a longer runway, the airport will no longer be able to operate the 'Hampton Turn', the southerly departure route from the current runway which takes planes away from the village of Hampton-in-Arden;
- more airport-related traffic congestion on an already over-stretched transport network.

The opposition campaigners also accused the airport of ignoring climate change in making its decision. Friends of the Earth regional campaigner Chris Crean said airport bosses needed to do more than just consider the issue of climate change. He said: "A vision for the next 23 years, which only seeks to 'consider' what is arguably the most important issue of our times – climate change – is woeful in the extreme. The aviation industry behaves as if they are on another planet with no responsibilities for current and future generations. They didn't want to mention climate change. This is one of the most important issues facing humankind."

## **DfT Criticised over Emissions Cost Assessment**

**One of the few new measures proposed in the review of the Aviation White Paper, published at the end of last year, was an undertaking by the Department for Transport to carry out what is called an Emissions Cost Assessment – an attempt to put a monetary value on the environmental cost of aircraft emissions. It has issued its proposals for – a very limited – consultation. Brendon Sewill, who heads up the AirportWatch economics group, is drafting our response. Below are some of his initial thoughts:**

We are shocked that, although over 180 bodies have been consulted, only about 12 are directly concerned with the environment. This appears at odds with the first paragraph of the consultation document which states: "this Government believes that [climate change] is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today." The fact that a high proportion of those consulted are airport owners, airlines or other bodies concerned with aviation reflects the continuing bias of the Department for Transport in favour of promoting aviation.

The consultation document also states that the emissions cost assessment will be used by the government "when considering major increases in airport capacity." We are therefore amazed that the list of bodies consulted does not include any of the groups which oppose airport expansion, and which are concerned about the growing impact of aviation on climate change, such as AirportWatch, HACAN, SSE, or GACC.

We strongly reject the implied conclusion of the consultation document that the current level of air passenger duty roughly covers the climate change cost of aviation. The climate change costs of aviation are shown to lie between £5.5 billion and £11.3 billion, far higher than the figures shown in the consultation document. On top of that air travellers should make some contribution to public services, as do motorists. Even these figures underestimate the damage because they do not include return flights by UK citizens; nor the damage caused by cirrus cloud and contrails; nor the need, as urged by most scientists, to aim for a tougher climate change target.

- **If you would like further information email Brendon Sewill, email [sewill@btconnect.com](mailto:sewill@btconnect.com)**

## **Emissions Trading: EU clashes with USA**

The European Union will press ahead with plans to include aviation in its emissions trading system despite United States' efforts through a U.N. body to discourage it, a spokeswoman for the EU executive said on Friday. Airline emissions were at the top of the agenda of a tri-annual meeting of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in Montreal, which began earlier this week. The United States, which opposes EU plans to include foreign airlines in its emissions trading scheme, is pushing ICAO to let individual nations decide the best way to manage greenhouse gas emissions from their airlines, a U.S. working paper says. But the European Commission, which authored the legislation that would include flights coming into and out of the 27-nation bloc from 2012 in the EU scheme, said it will go forward with its proposal, which it says is in line with international law.

- **The details of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme have yet to be finalised. We hope to cover them in the next bulletin.**

## **Useful Info**

- If you want a free **daily digest of what is in the papers**, check out Anthony Rae's excellent site [www.transportinfo.org.uk](http://www.transportinfo.org.uk)
- Remember, if you want help with organising your campaign, **Seeds for Change** offer free advice. Seeds for Change also do direct action training. Contact [oxford@seedsforchange.org.uk](mailto:oxford@seedsforchange.org.uk) or check out their website [www.seedsforchange.org.uk](http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk)
- For good legal advice contact the **Environmental Law Foundation**. They will give initial advice free. [www.elflaw.org](http://www.elflaw.org)

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