

Press Release

For immediate use

Poll of polls reveals public support for Government action on climate change

70% of people say government should take the lead in tackling climate change

Only 18% support expansion of UK airports

62% back reduction in short-haul flights from Heathrow

A poll of polls, released today by the campaign group HACAN, reveals that a majority of people are willing to change their own behaviour to tackle climate change but expect the Government to take the lead. The report, by Woodnewton Associates for enoughenough (1), found that although 78% of people say they would alter their behaviour, 70% expect a lead from the Government.

The report found there is no public appetite for airport expansion. Only 18% support it. Indeed, 57% of people support “a policy aimed at slowing down the growth in air travel”. When asked about reducing the number of short-haul flights at Heathrow to destinations where real alternatives existed, only 13% of people were opposed.

The report analysed the polls and studies carried out on attitudes to climate change, particularly as it relates to aviation, over the past four years.

Key findings of the report:

- Over **90%** of people believe climate change is a serious problem;
- **87%** believe the changing climate wholly or partially the result of human activity;
- **70%** argue the Government should take the lead in tackling climate change;
- **78%** say they would be prepared to change their behaviour because of climate change;
- **38%** support a “green tax” on airline tickets;
- But only **35%** oppose a “green tax” if the money goes to paying for environmental damage;
- Knowledge of the level of subsidies going to the aviation industry is low – only **7%** of people were aware of it;
- But only **2%** of people thought aviation should be heavily subsidised;
- Only **18%** of people support expansion of UK airports;
- **19%** want capacity reduced;

- **52%** favour a standstill on new capacity;
- Only **13%** were against cutting back any short-haul flights from Heathrow where real alternatives existed;
- **45%** said the number of flights to Manchester from Heathrow should be cut back.

The report concludes: “The appetite amongst the public to tackle climate change runs counter to the notion that action to curb aviation growth substantially would be impossible in the face of public opposition – or more colourfully, that it would be ‘political suicide’. This view was expressed thus by former Prime Minister Tony Blair in 2006 when speaking about using economic instruments to reduce demand for flying: “I cannot see myself that we would be in a position to say to the British consumer.....‘this is worth your while because of the impact on climate change’”.

HACAN Chair John Stewart said, “The message from this poll of polls is clear. The public want government action on climate change. They don’t want airport expansion. It is time that Gordon Brown and Ruth Kelly made a New Year’s resolution to end their cosy love-in with the aviation industry and listen to the British people instead.”

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Notes for Editors:

(1). The report, Aviation and Climate Change: Public Opinion and the Scope for Action was produced by Woodnewton Associates for enoughsenough and is attached.

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