

City Airport targeted by locals and activists as GLA launches enquiry into air quality controls

Written by jamie

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Today at 8am, City Airport will be treated to a rendition of Britney Spears 'Toxic' by activists and locals supporting the enquiry into its air quality controls happening today.

Despite sustained local opposition, in 2009 London City Airport was granted permission to expand from 73,000 flights each year to 120,000. The increase was subject to maintaining controls on air quality and noise pollution, which will be challenged today by the General London Assembly (GLA) environment committee.

The performers, dressed as air hostesses, are from activist group Climate Rush and will accuse Newham Council, who granted permission for the expansion, of not protecting its own constituents or those within surrounding boroughs.

Amid plans to expand to 173,000 flights, research by the Airport Environment Federation has found that such controls fail to tackle impacts on local communities[i], with residents health, quality of life and education under threat.

Several studies have found that aircraft noise greatly increases the risk of being hospitalised for cardiovascular disease or suffering a stroke[ii] and is a contributing factor to Asthma[iii]. Noise pollution has been found to be disruptive to children's educational development, in particular reading ability and recognition memory[iv], which is particularly poignant given the focus of recent campaigns on London children's reading.

In the light of yesterdays' strikes the cost implications of deteriorating air quality is serious - a health study estimated that the impact of man-made particulate air pollution experienced in the UK could cost the NHS up to £20.2 billion a year[v]. The Commons Environmental Audit Committee recently found that poor air quality may cause up to 50,000 premature deaths per annum in the UK[vi], and condemned the 'scandal' of Government "putting lives at risk by trying to water down EU air quality rules instead of prioritising action to cut pollution" [vii].

The annual growth of aviation emissions is nearly 6 times that of road traffic[viii] and plans are in place to further increase flights from City to 173,000 a year. Sarah Miles from Climate Rush, which is campaigning for better air quality for East London, says "We are supporting the GLA

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enquiry because without suitable controls and a halt to further expansion, the impact on the surrounding communities and the air quality in East London will be devastating”.

Tammy, a resident of Newham, said “The airport already has a destructive impact on the health and quality of life for my family. City Airport needs to be challenged and I urge all locals affected by the area to get involved!”

Locals from Newham or surrounding boroughs worried about air quality and noise pollution can go to www.climaterush.co.uk/cityairport to sign up.

The activists were arrested and held in custody for 12 hours last time they performed the peaceful protest. The case has since been dropped.