

Heathrow third runway: template letter to local newspapers

Dear [NAME],

Our region is crying out for investment in rail and bus services, but the Westminster government is throwing all its weight behind a new runway at Heathrow airport.

That runway will do nothing for [E.G. BRISTOLIANS]: two thirds of flights are taken by just 15% of the population – a privileged group of frequent leisure flyers, predominantly living in the South East.

More flights means more pollution. This should concern us all, given the daily reports of heartbreaking climate destruction around the world and here in the UK [“such as [INCLUDE LOCALLY RELEVANT EXAMPLE OF CLIMATE IMPACTS HERE]”].

It’s no surprise that next month the Government will be in court defending its decision, made last June, to expand Heathrow despite its legal obligation to cut carbon pollution year on year.

Since that decision, Ministers have asked expert advisors to review the UK’s long-term climate policies. Whatever the outcome in the courts, surely parliament should wait for that review to conclude and then look again at Heathrow?

A note on using the template

You’ll see in the template letter that we’ve left space to hammer home the impact that climate change is already having in the UK, and it would be great to make this as local as possible.

Last we year we audited academic research to identify areas where recent extreme weather events were made more severe or more likely by human-induced climate change. It’s important that we only use examples where there is sufficient evidence on this so do stick to the list below.

If there is not an example close enough to your local area to justify saying “nearby impacts” then we would suggest using a more general example such as the heatwave of 2018 which had impacts across much of the UK.

1. Coastal communities in **Norfolk** falling into the sea. Communities such as Happisburgh have seen as many as 35 homes claimed by coastal erosion in the past decade. Local campaigners have repeatedly appealed for more government assistance, but this has been refused and obscure laws means that compensation has been refused for those who have lost their homes to the sea.

2. Moorlands in the **North West** being turned into tinderboxes. Soaring summer temperatures in the UK led to moors such as Saddleworth burning for days on end; leaving them as charred husks, ruining ecosystems, threatening local towns and increasing air pollution. With a greater risk of summer heatwaves due to climate change, we may well see wildfires become a far too regular threat.
3. **York and Leeds** disappear under flood waters. York and Leeds saw devastating flooding off the back of Storm Eva in 2015 which led to people having to be evacuated by boat as water levels rose higher and higher. Scientists concluded that climate change had made the flooding more likely. This likelihood is only set to increase if steps are not taken to cut emissions.
4. Low-lying communities in **Somerset**. The winter of 2014 saw floods in the region leave homes and farms completely submerged, which had a knock in effect on farming and production for months. With Centre for Ecology and Hydrology researchers concluding the floods had indeed been worsened by climate change, the prospect of food scarcity and increased prices is becoming very real for UK consumers if the necessary action to avoid further climate chaos is not taken now.
5. Farmers facing heatwaves and droughts. As well as extreme flooding, UK farming is also threatened by the risk of regular summer heatwaves, like those seen this year which left farms across **Surrey, Kent and East Anglia** parched after weeks on end with no rain. Some farmers have noted crop yields lowered by upwards of 40%, which again has serious implications for future food stocks and prices.

Devon and Cornwall's coastal railways collapsing into the sea. Brutal Atlantic storms led to the collapse of a stretch of sea wall at Dawlish Warren – taking railway track with it. This left the main trainline connecting the region to the capital out of action for months. The impact on the community was all too real, but we must also consider the wider ramifications of key transport lines being disrupted by an increased number of extreme weather events in the future.