

**Doc. No. SSE/22/b  
Case Ref. 2032278**

Appeal by BAA Ltd and Stansted Airport Ltd following the refusal by Uttlesford District Council of planning application UTT/0717/06/FUL

## **Summary Proof of Evidence on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion**

### **Climate Change Impacts**

Aqqaluk Lyngø

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# **EVIDENCE OF THE WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE**

## **Aqqaluk Lyngge**

### **1 PERSONAL DETAILS**

- 1.1 My name is Aqqaluk Lyngge and I appear the Inquiry on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion ('SSE').
- 1.2 I am President of the Inuit Circumpolar Council, Greenland (ICC-Greenland) as well as Vice-Chair of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.
- 1.3 I was a Member of the Greenland Parliament from 1983 to 1995, served as Minister of Social Affairs from 2002 to 2005, Housing and Environment Minister from 1984 to 1988 and was Chairman of the Board of Greenland Trade from 1992 to 1995.
- 1.4 I was the ICC representative to the Arctic Council from 1995 to 2000 and a member of the Joint Commission on Greenland's Self-Government from 2003 to 2005.
- 1.5 I hold the Order of Dannebrog (First Grade) from H.M. the Queen of Denmark and the Order of Merit, Nersornaat in silver from the Greenland Government.

### **2 CORE EVIDENCE**

- 2.1 The environmental impacts of airport expansion are not only local. People who live near an airport are badly affected by aircraft noise and other local impacts but people who live far away are also now being badly affected. My evidence to the Public Inquiry will demonstrate that.

### **3 IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON MY LOCAL ENVIRONMENT**

- 3.1 The Arctic is no longer isolated from the rest of the world. What happens in countries such as Britain affects us in the North. Many of the economic and environmental challenges facing the Inuit result from activities well to the south of our homeland and Inuit traditions are being severely tested by the changing Arctic environment.
- 3.2 Inuit live near the Bering Strait in Russia, in Alaska, Arctic Canada, and Greenland. We are all affected by climate change. We have lived there for thousands of years – long before there was such a place called Canada, or Alaska, or Greenland. We are the same people, speak the same language, eat the same whale maktak and subsist off the same Arctic Ocean.
- 3.3 There is no longer any doubt that climate change is upon us and that it is real, that it is dramatic and life-altering for Inuit. For my people. Inuit are experiencing first hand the adverse effects of climate change. We are on the front line of globalization. We are not, however, powerless victims and refuse to act as though we are.
- 3.4 The Inuit Circumpolar Council, or ICC, is the organization that represents all Inuit on matters of international concern, environment, and human rights. I was the Chair of the

larger organization for six years and for the past five, I have been the President of the Greenland Chapter.

- 3.5 Climate change is something that the ICC takes very seriously and has done much lobbying internationally to try to halt it. We are active within many international bodies, including the 8-nation Arctic Council where we and five other indigenous peoples' organizations have permanent participant status. The ICC is working on many fronts to combat climate change. That is why I am here today explaining what is already happening in my homeland.
- 3.6 Following a trip to the Arctic in 2002, Michael Meacher the then UK environment minister pointed out that what happens in the world happens first in the Arctic. He is right. Inuit hunters and elders have for years reported changes to the environment that are now supported by American, British and European computer models that conclude climate change is amplified in high latitudes.
- 3.7 In February 2003, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme ('UNEP') passed a resolution effectively recognizing the Arctic as a 'barometer' or 'indicator region' of the globe's environmental health. This resolution called upon Arctic states to significantly increase environmental monitoring arrangements in the Arctic.
- 3.8 The Inuit people and the Arctic are sometimes overlooked, but in relation to global climate change I suggest you do so at your peril. What is happening now to Inuit will happen soon to you in the South. This is why the UNEP is looking to the Arctic and why you should as well.
- 3.9 For generations uncounted Inuit have observed the environment and have accurately predicted weather, enabling us to travel safely on the sea-ice to hunt seals, whales, walrus, and polar bears. We don't hunt for sport or recreation. Hunters put food on the table. You go to the supermarket, we go on the sea-ice. Eating what we hunt is at the very core of what it means to be Inuit. When we can no longer hunt on the sea-ice, and eat what we hunt, we will no longer exist as a people.
- 3.10 Not so long ago, Inuit hunters came to the ICC to tell us that there was something radically different going on. With Inuit science guiding them, they brought reports of thinning ice, disappearing ice floes, changing animal migration patterns and eroding shores. Their traditional knowledge, which they received from their grandparents who in turn received it from their grandparents before them, had given them an understanding that animal migration patterns change, as does the climate. But something was different they told us. They could no longer rely on their hunter knowledge in the same way.
- 3.11 Talk to hunters across the North and they will tell you the same story, the weather is increasingly unpredictable. The look and feel of the land is different. The sea-ice is changing. Hunters are having difficulty navigating and traveling safely. We have even lost experienced hunters through the ice in areas that, traditionally, were safe. As a result of melting glaciers it is now difficult sometimes even dangerous for us to travel to many of our traditional hunting and harvesting sites.
- 3.12 Polar bears, walrus, ringed seals and likely other species of seals are projected to virtually disappear. Our ecosystem will be transformed with tragic results. Where will we go then for our food? What then will become of Inuit?

- 3.13 Climate change in the Arctic is not just an environmental issue with unwelcome economic consequences. It is a matter of livelihood, food, and individual and cultural survival. It is a human issue. The Arctic is not wilderness or a frontier, it is our home and homeland.
- 3.14 We are not asking the world to take a backward economic step. All we are asking is that our neighbours in the south greatly reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases. This does not need big sacrifices but it will need some change in people's lifestyles; for example, is that plane trip really necessary?

## **4 CONCLUDING POINTS**

- 4.1 Planes are the fastest growing cause of climate change and if nothing is done to slow down the growth in travel by planes, then the problem will get worse.
- 4.2 You may say that the expansion of London Stansted Airport will play only a small part in increasing climate change but everyone can say that about almost everything they do. It is an excuse for doing nothing. The result of that attitude would be catastrophic. The serious consequences affecting my people today will affect your people tomorrow.
- 4.3 Planes are sometimes necessary. I could not have come here without travelling by plane. But I came here for an important purpose, Most flights from London Stansted Airport are not for an important purpose. They are mostly for holidays and leisure purposes.
- 4.4 Is it too much to ask for some moderation for the sake of my people today and your people tomorrow and for the sake of our children? For the sake also of our wildlife and everything else in the world's precious and fragile environment that is more important than holiday flights.
- 4.5 I hope you will make the right decision.