

**Doc. No. SSE/22/a
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

Proof of Evidence on behalf of Stop Stansted Expansion

Climate Change Impacts: Evidence of the Wider Environmental Impacts of Climate Change

Aqqaluk Lyngø

30 April 2007



www.stopstanstedexpansion.com
info@stopstanstedexpansion.com

PO Box 311
Takeley
Bishop's Stortford
Herts, CM22 6PY
Tel: 01279 870558

1 PERSONAL DETAILS

- 1.1 My name is Aqqaluk Lynge 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. And 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 It wasn't until 1977 that Inuit were first brought together from across these new nations by an Alaskan Inupiak, Eben Hopson. It was there that the Inuit Circumpolar Council – or ICC was born. The 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.
- 3.4 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. We are resolved to remain connected to the land, and sufficiently resilient to adapt to changing natural forces. I do not, however, know how well we will be able to adapt to the impacts of human-induced climate change.

- 3.5 It is my personal belief that strong cultures usually adapt to change and, in fact, are strengthened by it. I believe that this has happened with Inuit over time. We continue to be a strong people in spite of foreign whalers having decimated our stocks starting a few hundred years ago; in spite of missionaries changing our religion; in spite of colonization; and in spite of foreign diseases that temporarily weakened us. Other evidence, I admit, points to cultures that have been severely threatened and indeed destroyed by various outside influences. And, of course, Inuit have taken on many negative aspects of the outside world and some parts of us have been weakened by them.
- 3.6 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. Similar to some of our first experiences with allunaat from Europe, there is fear among us because of this new outside force called climate change. Yet, I think it would be unwise for us to throw in the towel. Our traditions are strong and we have adapted in the past. Let us hope we can do so once again with this new and devastating threat.
- 3.7 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 eight-nation Arctic Council where we and five other indigenous peoples' organizations have permanent participant status.
- 3.8 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.
- 3.9 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.
- 3.10 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.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 Discussion of climate change frequently tends to focus on political, economic and technical issues rather than human impacts and consequences. I want to alert you to the impacts that Inuit and other northerners are already experiencing as a result of human-induced climate change and to the dramatic impacts and social and cultural dislocation we face in coming years.
- 3.13 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.

- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 I have never been a full time hunter, but like all Greenlanders, I grew up around ice and observed its behaviour. Not as keenly as the seasoned hunter on a kayak attempting to harpoon a beluga whale, but I do still have a lot of respect for ice. I come from the Disko Bay area, where most of the North Atlantic's icebergs are produced by breaking off the Greenland ice cap and thunderously crashing into the sea below. It is quite a breathtaking sight, even for those of us who grew up nearby. UNESCO, in fact, has recently named the Ilulissat Ice Fjord – with its thousands of floating icebergs – a world heritage site.
- 3.16 A hunter gets to know his territory and the behaviour of “his” ice. He understands where the ice is thick and where it is thin and too dangerous to travel. He also knows how and when to approach the ice, if he respects it. Who knows what will happen in a few years from now, but already hunters are telling us that the sea ice is unpredictable in many places and they are not always sure of dealing with the different ice we see today. Traditional hunting grounds of ice floes, in some cases, have disappeared. And they tell us that some hunting areas are impossible to get to because of eroding shorelines.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 Several Inuit villages have already been so damaged by global warming that relocation, at the cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, is now their only option. Melting sea ice and thawing permafrost have caused:
- damage to houses, roads, airports and pipelines;
 - eroded landscape, slope instability, and landslides;
 - contaminated drinking water;
 - coastal losses to erosion of up to 100 feet per year;
 - melting natural ice cellars for food storage.
- 3.19 For example, in Shishmaref, Alaska, a small Inuit village on the Chukchi Sea, seven houses have had to be relocated, three have fallen into the sea, and engineers predict that the entire village of 600 houses could be swallowed by the sea within the next few decades. Shishmaref's airport runway has almost been met by rising seawater, and its fuel tank farm, which seven years ago was 300 feet from the edge of a seaside bluff, is now only 35 feet from the bluff. The town dump, which has seawater within 8 feet of it, could pollute the nearby marine environment for years if inundated. Advancing seawater has contaminated Shishmaref's drinking water supply.
- 3.20 We have documented similar changes to the environment in northern Canada. Residents of Sachs Harbour, a tiny community in the Canadian Beaufort Sea region, report:

- melting permafrost causing beach slumping and increased erosion;
 - increased snowfall;
 - longer sea-ice free seasons;
 - new species of birds and fish-barn owls, robins, pin-tailed ducks, and salmon-invading the region;
 - invasion of mosquitoes and black flies.
- 3.21 Plans are well underway to relocate certain Arctic communities. Climate change is not just a theory to us in the Arctic; it is a stark and dangerous reality. Human-induced climate change is undermining the ecosystem upon which Inuit depend for their physical and cultural survival.
- 3.22 Think about that for a moment. Emission of greenhouse gases from planes, cars and factories threatens our ability far to the North to live as we have always done-in harmony with a fragile, vulnerable, and sensitive environment. I am sure you can see the unhappy irony.
- 3.23 Some might dismiss our concerns saying: "the Arctic is far away and few people live there." That would be immensely short-sighted as well as callous. The Arctic is of vital importance in the global debate on how to deal with climate change. That's because the Arctic is the barometer of the globe's environmental health. You can take the pulse of the world in the Arctic. Inuit, the people who live farther north than anyone else, are the canary in the global coal mine.
- 3.24 The Arctic Climate Impact Assessment ('ACIA') and the accompanying policy recommendations were initiated in October 2000 by the eight Arctic states that make up the Arctic Council – Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and the United States. The ICC and other northern indigenous peoples participated actively in the ACIA.
- 3.25 The ACIA was prepared by more than 250 authors from 15 countries and chaired by the United States. It makes stark reading. Dramatic and drastic depletion of sea-ice is projected. By 2070 to 2090 year-round sea-ice will be limited to a small portion of the Arctic Ocean around the North Pole. The rest of the Arctic will be ice-free in summer. Imagine what that means for Inuit.
- 3.26 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?
- 3.27 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.
- 3.28 What can Inuit – only 155,000 of us – do about this global situation? First, we refuse to play the role of powerless victim. Responding to climate change has split the nations of the world. Our plight and the Arctic assessment show the compelling case for global unity and clarity of purpose to forestall a future that is not preordained.
- 3.29 Our rights – our human rights that we share with all of you – to live as we do and to enjoy our unique culture-part of the globe's cultural heritage – are at issue. The Arctic dimension and Inuit perspectives on global climate change need to be heard in the corridors of power.

- 3.30 What can Inuit do to convince the world to take action? How do we convince the major emitters of the risks we face in the Arctic and the need for effective international action? How can we bring some clarity of purpose and focus to a debate that seems mired in technical arguments and competing economic ideologies?
- 3.31 We are not asking the world to takes 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.