

PRESS RELEASE

TAKING TRAINS OVER PLANES COULD CUT BRITAIN'S AVIATION EMISSIONS IN HALF

Banning domestic passenger flights for journeys with viable train routes of under four-and-a-half hours would cut Great Britain's emissions from domestic aviation in half, according to a new report published today by the Intergenerational Foundation think tank.

The report, entitled "***Trains over Planes: why the government should encourage domestic train travel***", also found that almost a third of journeys are as fast or faster by train as they are by aeroplane, with almost two-thirds taking less than 30 minutes extra by train.

Angus Hanton, IF Co-Founder, comments, "We are all aware of the risks posed by climate change, and reducing domestic flights is one way in which we can significantly reduce the UK's greenhouse gas emissions. Banning domestic flights with a viable alternative by train would be a faster route to our Net Zero targets and a small but important contribution to protecting future generations from the effects of climate change."

Wera Hobhouse, Liberal Democrat MP for Bath and author of the report's foreword, added, "The public understand that flying harms the environment but they need policy support to help encourage them out of planes and onto trains. If the French can ban domestic flights with a rail equivalent so too can the United Kingdom."

Domestic aviation was responsible for emitting 2.7 megatonnes of CO₂ and CO₂ equivalents in 2019. However, almost two-thirds (62%) of CO₂ emissions from UK domestic flights in 2019 were between cities linked by the rail network, and are potentially replaceable by rail travel.

Some inter-city travel across England, Wales and Scotland is actually faster by train. The report found that the Newcastle-London and Manchester-London routes have faster city-centre to city-centre travel by train than by aeroplane.

The report calls for the government to ban domestic flights on routes that could be travelled by rail in 4.5 hours or less. The think tank calculates that this would result in a 53% reduction in CO₂ emissions from domestic flights within Great Britain and a 33% reduction in CO₂ emissions from all of UK domestic aviation.

Travelling by aeroplane is seven times more harmful in terms of CO₂ and other greenhouse gas emissions than travelling by train. The Intergenerational Foundation think tank argues that the negative environmental effects of domestic aviation are not reflected in air fares, and that successive governments have failed to adequately tax air fuel and passengers according to the "polluter pays" principle.

2/...

Tax reforms on aviation could also raise money for government investment in green technology and affordable travel: the report says that levying fuel duty on aviation kerosene and replacing Air Passenger Duty with VAT would have seen the Treasury receive up to £478 million more in 2019.

The report also urges the government to end taxpayer subsidies for domestic aviation, do more to encourage passengers to travel by train, and to increase the capacity on high-demand rail routes.

- Ends -

Notes to editors:

Further statistics:

- Travel by train is seven times more environmentally friendly than flying.
- UK domestic aviation emitted 2.7Mt of CO2 in 2019: This is equivalent to the annual emissions of 1.7 million typical UK petrol cars or the gas and electricity use of 700,000 UK homes.
- Fuel used for road transport is subject to fuel duty at 57.95p per litre with VAT being levied at 20% on the after-tax price of fuel. Diesel used for passenger rail travel is zero-rated for VAT but is subject to fuel duty of 11.14p per litre, the rebated gas oil (red diesel) rate. Domestic airlines pay no fuel duty on kerosene (jet fuel) and tickets are zero-rated for VAT.
- The only direct tax paid by the aviation sector is Air Passenger Duty (APD) which currently stands at £13 per ticket for domestic flights. This will be further reduced to £6.50 for domestic journeys in 2023.

Media interviews are available with Angus Hanton, IF Co-founder.

Please contact: Liz Emerson (liz@if.org.uk / 07971 228823)

Intergenerational Foundation

www.if.org.uk

charity no: 1142 230

[Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Podcast](#)