

# Grant Shapps: a minister without any sense of responsibility?

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The [Guardian](#) has noted that:

*The transport secretary, [Grant Shapps](#), promised EasyJet that green taxes would not be levied on airlines six months before the company was given a £600m coronavirus crisis loan with no environmental conditions attached, newly released documents show.*

Direct lobbying against environmental taxes by Britain's biggest airline are revealed in Freedom of Information Act responses obtained by Unearthed, Greenpeace's investigations unit.

Evidence of the lobbying came as airlines across Europe were set to receive more than €26bn (£22.7bn) in taxpayers' money for coronavirus bailouts with no binding environmental conditions attached, according to data compiled by Transport & Environment, Carbon Market Watch and [Greenpeace](#).

I will not be alone in finding this staggering, I know.

And this further report by them is as shocking:

*The meeting with Johan Lundgren, the boss of EasyJet, took place shortly after Shapps's appointment as transport secretary last year. During the meeting, Shapps reassured the CEO he wanted the Department for [Transport](#) to be pro-aviation.*

We know that flying is massively polluting.

We also know that most flying is by a fairly small part of the population - maybe 15% at most.

And we know that 92% of air travel is for leisure.

And we know that if we are to meet climate change targets - or even come close to meeting them - then massive change in the volume of air travel is required, where 'massive' means that most of it should not happen now.

What is more, we know that EasyJet paid a dividend of £171 million before applying for this state aid, at a time when it was obvious that the lockdown was inevitable.

So what we have is a minister promising state aid, regardless of the environmental consequences, to a company that is recklessly irresponsible in the face of the risks that it is exposed to, and who says that he will attach no conditions of any sort to it, whilst seeking to promote an industry that all available evidence says is now profoundly harmful.

And this government wants us to believe in its good intent? On this issue? On COP 26? On anything, come to that?

That's very hard when the evidence is that this government is completing failing to uphold its public duties.

We'll probably come out of the Covid-19 crisis deeply scarred. Many more alive now will not make it through it. That should sadden us all. But there will be another side. We cannot say that for sure of the coming climate crisis. There is absolutely no guarantee, and very little hope, of coming out the other side of that without radical action. But the government is in denial on that.

I'm not shocked by this behaviour. It is, despite my best hopes, what I expected. But I am angered by it.

I was working with others on a frequent flying levy before the project got side tracked by this crisis. We need one, very badly.

But most of all we need ministers who take their responsibilities seriously.