

# The last thing this country needs is an expansion of Ga...

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As the [Guardian reports](#) this morning:

*Gatwick Airport's £2.2bn second runway plan has been given the go-ahead by the transport secretary, Heidi Alexander.*

*With the privately financed project, the West Sussex hub is aiming to increase its capacity by 100,000 flights a year.*

They added:

*Gatwick will move its emergency runway 12 metres north, enabling it to be used for departures of narrow-bodied planes such as Airbus A320s and Boeing 737s.*

*The new runway is expected to add 14,000 jobs and as much as £1bn in extra economic activity.*

In a sane world, this would not happen.

Every plane going down the runway at Gatwick brings us closer to a climate catastrophe.

Ninety-two per cent of the flights from the UK are for tourism: this destruction of the planet is all about the relentless promotion of the idea that some must have a right to travel, largely as a form of conspicuous consumption of the sort [John Christensen discussed here last week](#).

A quick Google search revealed this:

- \* **10-15% of the population take the most flights:**
- \* **In 2019, the 10% most frequent flyers in England took more than half of all international flights.**
- \* **A 2021 study showed that in the UK, 15% of the population took 70% of all flights.**

- \* **In 2014, a Department for Transport survey found that 15% of adults in Great Britain accounted for 71% of flights.**
- \* **Smallest group of frequent flyers still dominates:** A June 2025 analysis noted that "ultra-frequent flyers," who make up less than 3% of the UK population, are responsible for 30% of all air journeys taken by UK residents.
- \* **About half the population does not fly in a given year:**
- \* **In the 12 months before 2019, nearly half (48%) of England's population did not take a single flight abroad.**
- \* **A 2021 study noted that approximately 50% of the UK population does not participate in air travel annually.**

- \* **High income is a major factor:** Frequent air travel is strongly correlated with higher household income and educational attainment. This means that taxes on aviation would disproportionately affect wealthier individuals.
- \* **Higher earners travel more frequently:** Before the COVID-19 pandemic, 42% of the highest income households (£75,000+) flew more often than once or twice a year, while over half of low-income households (£25,000 and under) flew less than once or twice a year or never.

In other words, the wealthiest in a wealthy country are reserving their right to destroy the planet for everyone else.

And, meanwhile, Gatwick Airport has liked to style itself as a carbon-neutral airport by ignoring the emissions it enables.

If only we had sustainable cost accounting *[of the type I described here](#)*, it would be **glaringly obvious that this expansion will not add £1 billion to the economy, but will in fact make it very much worse off, increasing the overall carbon insolvency of the economy we live in. And that, of course, is precisely why we need sustainable cost accounting.**