



SHOULD YOU

LAST YEAR, HUNDREDS OF ECO-WARRIORS* CAMPED NEXT TO HEATHROW AIRPORT. CLUB INVESTIGATES WHY THEY THINK WE SHOULD STOP FLYING.

BEFORE YOU READ:



- Do you travel by plane?
- If so, how often and why?
- Would you stop flying to help protect the environment?
- Do you think it would be easy for you and your family to give up flying?



Is it a music festival? No, it's the Camp for Climate Action 2007

Watching the tanned 20-year-olds set up their tents, you might think you were at the latest music festival. But the police officers around the site, and the **747s** roaring* overhead, revealed a different story. What were they doing camped right next to Heathrow Airport? On the surface, protesting against a third **runway** being built at Britain's busiest airport. But as 26-year-old Alice James, a PhD student in physics, explains, "We are trying to say to the people over there" – she points at Heathrow – "do you know the connection between your flights and the hurricanes, floods and droughts we are seeing intensify* across the world? Do you care?"

PERU, CUBA AND HEATHROW?

At stake is the issue that could affect the future of the planet: global warming. The protestors claim that Heathrow is responsible for 31 million tonnes of carbon emissions* a year – more than many countries, including Peru, Cuba and Croatia. "People can't now contemplate* flying without contemplating their impact on the climate," says Joss Garman of Plane Stupid, an environmental action group.

PLANE CONNECTION

So what's the connection between climate change and jet planes?

- Aviation currently only accounts for 4 per cent of the UK's **greenhouse gases**. But it's the rate of growth

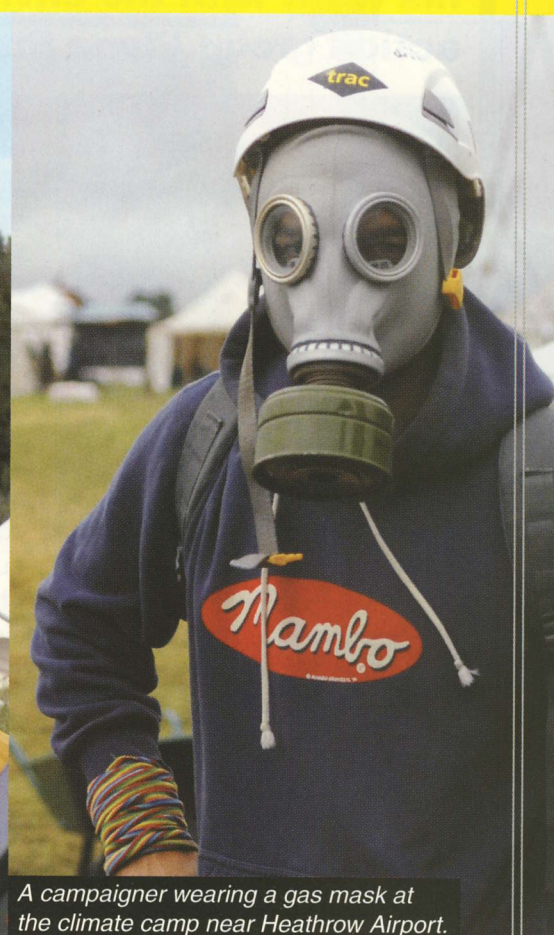
that concerns the protestors. By 2030, the number of people flying in or out of UK airports could double to 465 million. Experts predict the figure for greenhouse gases will rise to over 60% by the year 2050.

- Planes may be among the least understood sources of pollution in the atmosphere. "Aviation's impact goes far beyond carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas," says Ivar Isaksen, an expert at Oslo University in how aviation affects the atmosphere.

- Studies by the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) suggest that **condensation trails** from aircrafts' **exhausts** can deplete ozone in the atmosphere and that at high altitudes, jet engines have additional impact.



STOP FLYING?



A campaigner wearing a gas mask at the climate camp near Heathrow Airport.



- As a result, aircraft emissions are said to have between two to four times the global warming potential as ground-level CO².

PROMISES, PROMISES!

But airline chiefs claim they are taking their responsibility to the environment seriously. easyJet has published an Environmental Code, which contains three promises – “that easyJet will be efficient in the air, efficient on the ground and will help shape a greener future for the industry,” according to Andy Harrison, easyJet Chief Executive. More impressively, Virgin Air boss, Sir Richard Branson says that Virgin will invest heavily in developing aviation **biofuels**.

FUTURE FLEETS

There are other ideas, for example, improving aircrafts' **aerodynamics** and reducing their weight. This could result in future **fleets** being 40-50% more efficient than current designs. However, green groups question if the industry is really serious about the environment. Jeff Gazzard, co-ordinator of the Greenskies Alliance, says: “The industry is trying to carry on growing as fast as it can. The only realistic solution is to fly less.”



www.planestupid.com



www.flyingmatters.com

PLANE ENGLISH

747 = Boeing 747.

runway = long piece of level ground on which aircraft take off and land.

greenhouse gas = a gas which is believed to cause global warming, especially carbon dioxide.

condensation trail (contrail) = a visible trail of condensed water vapour or ice particles left behind an aircraft.

exhaust = waste pipe from an engine.

biofuel = fuel produced from renewable biological resources such as plant material and treated waste.

aerodynamics = the way that solid bodies such as aircraft move through gases.

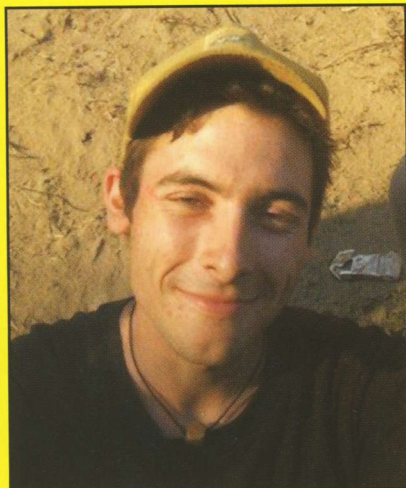
fleet = a number of aircraft under the control of one person or organisation.





THE CLUB INTERVIEW

We asked Robbie Gillet, 21, about his work with the environmental action group *Plane Stupid*.



CLUB: When did you first encounter the group *Plane Stupid*?

Robbie: I first got involved with *Plane Stupid* after attending the Climate Camp 2006 [protesting against a power station]. It was quite a **life-changing** event

for me. The camp made me realise how climate change needed to be addressed as a priority.

CLUB: How did you get more involved?

Robbie: In the following September I took part in the action at Nottingham East Midlands airport. It was an unforgettable experience, especially because the police raided* our homes and confiscated* important possessions like bank cards, mobile phones, laptops and house keys. That really **bonded*** me to the group. I'd placed an emotional investment in the issue of climate change, I wasn't going to sit back and just ignore the scientists screaming from the sidelines*. Now I work voluntarily as a Press Officer for *Plane Stupid* as well coordinating the Manchester group.

CLUB: What do you think is the best way to go about limiting people's flights?



Robbie: The best way to reduce flights is to introduce **Emissions Quotas**. In this scheme all individuals would be given an equal amount of carbon they are allowed to emit. Considering how little carbon we can safely emit, people might not wish to waste their quota on flights when they could take less polluting alternatives. We need electricity a lot more than we need cheap flights to Amsterdam!

CLUB: Did you find it difficult to give up flying?

Robbie: Not at all. I recently went to Serbia for the Exit Festival. I hitch-hiked with my girlfriend, as well as taking the train and bus. If you make the journey part of the holiday, it is a much more satisfying experience, rather than just flying over to somewhere, consuming it like a fast food meal, ticking it off on your city break list, and flying back.

CLUB: What message would you like to give to young people?

Robbie: Don't feel like you can't **make a difference**. We have a much better perception of the world because we are not **jaded*** by boring career concerns, mortgages and dental insurance. We are the last generation that can stop climate change. That is a huge responsibility and one that we all need to step up to*. The most important thing is to get involved however you can.

Have you heard of any other ideas to reduce flights?

Would you find it difficult to give up flying? Why / why not?

How could you make a difference?

Have you ever experienced any life-changing events?

Do you belong to any groups? What do you think bonds groups together?



***GLOSSARY** eco warriors (n) – people who try to stop damage to the environment • **emission** (n) – a gas or other substance that is sent into the air (from the verb *to emit*) • **roar** (v) – make a loud noise • **intensify** (v) – become worse • **contemplate** (v) – think about • **tow** (v) – pull using another vehicle • **raid** (v) – when the police enter a place suddenly in order to find someone or something • **confiscate** (v) – to take a possession away from someone when you have the right to do so, usually as a punishment and often for a limited period • **bond** (v) – make a close connection • **from the sidelines** (phr) – not actively involved • **jaded** (adj) – lacking enthusiasm because something has been experienced too many times • **step up to** (phr v) – face