

Press Release: “Sustainable” Aviation - A Dangerous Flightpath

Date: 1st December 2021

Time: 8.30-10.00am

Location: McKinsey Head Office, 100 Museum Street, London, WC1A 1PB

Video Link: [▶ “Sustainable” Aviation: A Dangerous Flightpath](#)

McKinsey, the high priestesses of corporate greenwash, are at it again! Extinction Rebellion, who were on their doorstep for a year to October 2020, had hoped that they would start number crunching for the planet. Even 1,000 of their employees - their main asset - requested they publish their client's emissions. But they have not changed their ways, instead they have been promoting a bizarre oxymoron, 'Sustainable Aviation Fuel' (SAF), as well as still flying their way to the top 10 worst companies for corporate emissions. This action occurs while the [World Aviation Festival](#), sponsored by the usual airline, aerospace and fossil fuel companies, opens for a two day conference with the aim to return to a pre-pandemic growth trajectory: [a doubling of air traffic over the next 15 years](#). All this occurs in the height of a climate & ecological emergency, where ecocide becoming law is being suggested, and when Covid has demonstrated that many business flights can be replaced with virtual meetings.

McKinsey have co-written the '[Clean Skies for Tomorrow](#)' report with the World Economic Forum and their partners including the [Energy Transition Commission](#), a 'think tank' commissioned by fossil fuel, mining, banking and aviation companies. This report, amongst others written by McKinsey, pushes SAF as an alternative to fossil fuels and is quoted by both governments and corporations to justify airport expansion.

However, as Finlay Asher, co-founder of [Safe Landing](#), a group of climate-concerned aviation workers explained: "Most alternative jet fuels [simply aren't that sustainable](#). Much of this so-called 'SAF' uses biofuels-from-crops that result in land use change emissions due to deforestation, which can be worse than using fossil fuels. Producing jet fuel using waste biomass or renewable energy is also an [inefficient use of these scarce global resources](#), which could be used for greater emissions reductions elsewhere. Fundamentally, even if this was a good idea, timescales are against us for building the necessary facilities to produce these fuels in any significant quantity. The only way we can guarantee reduced emissions, is to reduce how much we fly".

The aviation industry accounts for about [3% of global CO2 emissions](#), which is more than entire countries e.g. the [UK, Brazil or Mexico](#). However, CO2 only accounts for one third of aviation's climate impact, with [the other two thirds resulting from other non-CO2 emissions](#) such as nitrous oxide, water vapour and contrail cirrus clouds. While the airline industry argues that there has been significant improvement in aircraft fuel efficiency, [this has been dwarfed](#) by the rapid growth in passenger numbers.

Rachel Blackmore of Extinction Rebellion said "Aviation fuel isn't taxed: if we applied the same fuel duty as motorists pay for petrol & diesel in the UK, [it would raise £10bn](#). Aircraft manufacture is [also subsidised](#) - making it cheaper for the [1% of people that](#)

[cause 50% of all commercial aviation emissions](#). If governments are serious about the climate and ecological emergency they should subsidise public transport options such as rail and coach services, rather than continuing to throw money at aviation.”

The action, set in a aeroplane, will follow the [metaphor of flying by Dan Tipney](#), a pilot who is also a member of [Safe Landing](#): where passengers see the plane is on fire, but the greater desire to reach the destination on time to meet targets and maintain ‘growth’ overrides the need to take immediate action. The passengers are called ‘alarmist’ and ‘doom-mongers’ while the McKinsey executive in business class, funded by fossil fuel lobbyists, explains that the plane is run on sustainable fuel and they’ve bought carbon offsets against a forest that was purchased by forcibly evicting [indigenous people](#) and has since [burned down](#).

For the year leading to October 2020, Extinction Rebellion targeted McKinsey asking for them to reduce their scope 3 flying emissions, stop advising the fossil fuel companies, and publish the percentage of clients following science based targets. Although McKinsey have set a target to reduce flying by 30%, this falls short of their competitors and they remain in the top ten businesses for flying. Six months ago an [open letter](#) to the McKinsey partners, signed by over 1,000 of their consultants, asked for the company to disclose how much carbon its customers emit into the atmosphere. “The climate crisis is the core issue of our generation,” the letter said. “Our positive impact in other areas will mean nothing if we do not act as our customers irreversibly change the Earth.” In 2018, McKinsey clients accounted for one third of the world’s emissions.

This action will put further pressure on the consultancy to listen to their staff and change their aviation strategy: using a more appropriate ‘Alternative Jet Fuel’ instead of the term ‘Sustainable Aviation Fuel’ would be a start.

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Websites:

- Greenwash.earth: <https://www.greenwash.earth/airlines>
- Stay Grounded: <https://stay-grounded.org/greenwashing/>
- Safe Landing: safe-landing.org
- Green Peace: [Green Aviation, another net-zero scam](#)

McKinsey reports:

- Scaling [Sustainable Aviation Fuel](#)
- Back to the future? [Airline sector poised for change post-COVID-19](#)
- How airlines can chart a [path to zero-carbon flying](#)

Hashtags:

#Greenwashing, #ReduceAirTraffic, #SustainableAviation!, #AviationFest

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