



PRESS RELEASE

****EMBARGOED UNTIL 12NOON, 29 AUGUST 2020****

XR NEWHAM PROTEST VERY IMMORAL POLLUTION OF LONDON CITY AIRPORT AS PART OF 4 DAYS OF ACTION

TODAY, Saturday 29th August, London City Airport Private Jet Centre is being visited not by its usual super rich clients but by community activists from Extinction Rebellion Newham. For XR Newham, the Private Jet Centre - which also houses the Airport's VIP Lounge – epitomises the injustice in our society that is leading us to catastrophic climate breakdown.

Putting a new spin on “VIP”, XR Newham rebels headed for the Jet Centre and unfurled a banner emblazoned with the words “VERY IMMORAL POLLUTION”. With private jets emitting ten times the amount of carbon per passenger to regular commercial flights, the environmental impact of such private travel is huge.¹ At another UK airport last year, the average private jet landing “last year carried just two passengers.”² The immense carbon footprints and pollution fallouts of the few are degrading the lives of the many, and Newham is on the frontline.

XR are calling for action to reduce this rapidly expanding sector. NetJets, which operates out of London City Airport, say business is booming: its president said earlier this year that “May is on track to be the best month of new customer relationships that we’ve seen in the past 10 years [...] Concerns about opulence and concerns about environmental issues are gone.”³ XR Newham say this is the opposite of the green recovery we so badly need. Airplane exhaust, like car exhaust, contains a variety of air pollutants, including sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides. Researchers say pollutants emitted by planes kill about 10,000 people each year,⁴ and the activists and residents of XR Newham are clear they do not want this toxicity in their community.

XR Newham rebels added drama to their protest with performance artists the Landing Crew, the silent performers dressed as the ground handling crew. Brandishing paddles bearing anti-aircraft and burning earth symbols, they assembled outside the Jet Centre and conducted a choreography designed to captivate viewers and point us in the right direction: out of the skies and onto our beautiful earth.

Through speakers who took to the megaphone outside the Jet Centre, XR Newham’s action also draws attention to an injustice epitomised by a Financial Times headline last year: “The boom in private aviation: why borders don’t bother the

¹ Coffey, Helen. “[How bad are private jets for the environment?](#)”. Independent, 20 August 2019.

² Jones, Sam. “[The boom in private aviation: why borders don’t bother the super-wealthy.](#)” Financial Times, 26 February 2019.

³ Sullivan, Paul. “[Wealthy Fliers Worried About Coronavirus Turn to Private Jet Service.](#)” New York Times, 30 May 2020.

⁴ Inman, Mason. “[Plane Exhaust Kills More People Than Plane Crashes.](#)” National Geographic, 10 October 2010.

super-wealthy”.⁵ “We are living in a world where people fleeing climate-related disaster elsewhere in the world are drowning at sea, trying to get to safety, when at the same time the world’s wealthiest are enjoying hyper-mobility as they hop across borders in their private jets. And as they do so, they pollute communities like Newham and destabilise the global climate even more” said Simon Shaw, a teacher from XR Newham. Joined by Stand Up to Racism, the activists are pointing to a situation described in the FT: “There is no escaping the fact that, the more money you bring to the table, the less the UK’s border force seems to openly trouble you.”⁶ XR Newham demand justice for people seeking asylum on our shores, and an end to the climate-wrecking activities like private aviation which are worsening global forced migration.

DOCTORS FOR XR ACT IN NEWHAM

The action comes a day after Doctors for Extinction Rebellion organised a UK-wide stand against the health crises being caused by fossil fuels, where Newham took centre stage. Warning labels were stuck to petrol pumps all over Newham as part of a national campaign led by Doctors for XR, calling for greater transparency about the damage to health caused by fossil fuels. Newham is the most polluted borough in the UK⁷, and XR Newham wants to draw attention to the health crisis being caused by fossil fuel air pollution. Graphic images on the stickers imitated existing cigarette packet health warnings; the government’s “Stay Alert” coronavirus banners; and the wartime “Your country needs you” posters, with David Attenborough’s face replacing that of Lord Kitchener.

These labels aren’t the first of their kind. After years of campaigning by the Swedish Association of Green Motorists, the first “Eco-labels” were put on Swedish fuel pumps on July 6th this year.⁸ Cambridge, Massachusetts will be next, having unanimously passed a law on January 13th 2020 requiring public safety warnings at fuel pumps.⁹ Many health professionals echo the warning being sounded by Doctors for XR, like consultant child psychiatrist Dr. Lynne Jones OBE who says “There is growing evidence that air pollution is associated with learning difficulties in children, and may affect the baby in the womb. Fossil fuels are damaging our children’s brains before they’re even born, and we have to do something about it.”

GP Dr David McKelvey adds: “By strengthening cycle networks, increasing public transport, building on the growth in teleworking, and encouraging localism we can make the air cleaner, our climate safer and our neighbourhoods better places to live. This drive to get off fossil fuels and move rapidly away from the internal combustion engine will clearly improve our patients’ health.”

⁵ Jones, Sam. 2019.

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ King, Jon. “Newham named as the most polluted borough in the UK”, Newham Recorder, 9 December 2019.

⁸ <http://www.gronabilister.se/kraftringen-the-first-company-in-the-world-to-put-eco-labels-on-their-fuel-pumps>

⁹ <http://rwinters.com/council/011320R1.htm>

XR NEWHAM CALL FOR COMMUNITY TO JOIN THE 'CYCLE CATERPILLAR'

Ending its weekend of actions, and leading into a new central London Rebellion, XR Newham is calling for the community to join a family-friendly cycling event on Monday 31st August. Groups of up to six participants will become colourful caterpillars for a cycle ride across Newham's green spaces, cycles paths and canal paths. The ride will be the opportunity to call a cleaner air and safer streets in Newham: for better cycling infrastructure, a reduction of traffic and more green and wild spaces. The ride will start at 2pm at Hermit Road Recreation Ground, and maps of the itinerary will be provided. The ride will be followed by a gathering in the park at 3.30 pm.

ENDS

For press images or to get in touch, see:

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About Extinction Rebellion

Time has almost entirely run out to address the ecological crisis which is upon us, including the 6th mass species extinction, global pollution, and abrupt, runaway climate change. Extinction Rebellion is an international movement that uses non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse.

Extinction Rebellion believes it is a citizen's duty to rebel, using peaceful civil disobedience, when faced with criminal inactivity by their Government.

Extinction Rebellion's key demands are:

1. **#TellTheTruth:** Government must tell the truth by declaring a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.
2. **#ActNow:** Government must act now to halt biodiversity loss and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2025.
3. **#BeyondPolitics:** Government must create and be led by the decisions of a Citizens' Assembly on climate and ecological justice.

Further details about Doctors for Extinction Rebellion: <http://www.doctorsforxr.com/>