

## Munich: ‘The German Heathrow’



Munich could become the German Heathrow. There is a fighting chance that the protesters against the proposed third runway at Munich could match the success of the campaigners who successfully defeated plans for a third runway at Heathrow. If the Munich campaigners do triumph, it will reinforce the message sent out by the famous Heathrow victory that it has become increasingly difficult to build new runways or new airports anywhere in Europe.

There are clear signs in Munich too that the campaigners have every chance of success. Along with Dan Glass of Plane Stupid and Tamsin Omond of Climate Rush – both networks which played an important role in the Heathrow success – I visited the Munich campaigners at the end of February.

*“There are clear signs that the campaigners against the third runway in Munich could match the success of the Heathrow campaigners”*

**These are the reasons why I believe the Munich campaigners will be successful.**

- There is a committed group of climate activists – coordinated by Young Friends of the Earth Bavaria – who have made links with local residents whose communities would be destroyed by new runway or whose lives would be damaged by the noise.
- They are supported by a number of politicians from most of the political parties.
- The case for the new runway is almost laughably weak
  - The existing runways are nowhere near capacity. In order to fill the new runway, the airport will need to attract planes from other airports. It is a bit like building a school and then asking the population to make enough babies to fill it! It is thought that Lufthansa may view an additional runway as useful in case Frankfurt – its main base – becomes too congested
  - The airport is justifying the billions of pounds of largely public money it would cost to build the new runway on the fact that it would reduce delays to passengers to 4 minutes (from 9 minutes), thus making the airport attractive to more people. It would be more cost-effective to buy Greece!
  - There is no need for more jobs in the vicinity. The immediate area around the airport has the lowest rate of unemployment - 2.8% - in the whole of Germany. And Munich is already Germany’s richest city.
  - Munich has the largest number of flights to domestic destinations of any German Airport – a lot of them could be transferred to rail.
- The campaigners are starting early. It will be some years before the runway could be started which gives them time to build up their campaign.
- The beginnings of an excellent campaign are already in place.



Young Friends of the Earth Bavaria, driven by the concern about climate change, have brought together a first-rate coalition of environmental activists, local residents, sympathetic politicians and academic experts.



Local residents, closest to the airport, whose community would be destroyed by the airport are producing very professional information about what will happen to them.

There is a strong local umbrella group, AufgeMUCkt, representing over 80 groups. In Freising, the town closest airport, as many as 800 local people hold a candle-lit procession every week, followed by a short outdoor church service, in the main square. They end by singing “we shall overcome”. A truly moving experience



### Going Forward

Given the power of the aviation industry, it is always a tough fight for campaigners, but the Munich campaigners intend to build on the success they already have had. Expect to see lively actions, flashmobs, a climate camp, peaceful direct action, a growing coalition and a serious challenge to the reasons given for building the new runway.



**YES  
WE  
CAN!**



# YES THEY DID!

## City-wide referendum throws out 3<sup>rd</sup> runway

On 17<sup>th</sup> June 2012 the people of **Munich** voted 54% - 47% against a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway in a city-wide referendum in a snub to the authorities. The result was a victory for the very impressive campaign which brought together climate activists, led by Young Friends of the Earth Bavaria, with local residents. Their activities ranged from a spectacular banner drop by Plane Stupid Germany (right) to moving candle-lit church services. They also commissioned work from consultants give them solid economic

arguments against the need for the runway. The referendum is binding for a year but, with elections due next year, it will be difficult for the



authorities to back a 3<sup>rd</sup> runway. The 3<sup>rd</sup> runway has never been built.

Written by John Stewart, 2012



Plane Stupid Germany unfurl banner from Munich City Hall