# Court of Appeal upholds drone protest convictions of Extinction Rebellion co-founder Roger Hallam



Roger Hallam, the co-founder of the environmental campaign group Extinction Rebellion, has suffered a setback after the Court of Appeal upheld his conviction for conspiring to fly drones over Heathrow Airport, aiming to disrupt its operations. The appeal was dismissed on Wednesday by a panel comprising Lord Justice William Davis, Mr Justice Goss, and Mr Justice Dexter Dias.

Hallam and fellow activist Larch Maxey were convicted in 2023 of conspiring to cause a public nuisance by planning to unlawfully fly drones within Heathrow’s flight restriction zone. The conspiracy aimed to close the airport to air traffic, thereby drawing attention to their environmental cause. Both men received two-year suspended sentences in April last year, which carry an 18-month suspension period, sparing them immediate imprisonment.

The original trial at Isleworth Crown Court revealed that the plan, engineered under the banner "Heathrow Pause", sought to force a shutdown of the busy airport through drone interference. Prosecutors argued the disruption was intended to go viral, trigger mass arrests, and generate significant publicity to challenge governmental plans for a third runway expansion at Heathrow. James Curtis KC, who represented the prosecution, told jurors in the initial trial that although some arrests took place during the September 2019 protest, the planned mass drone deployment ultimately fizzled out and did not materialise on the anticipated scale.

Curtis highlighted the extent of police preparation for the protest, noting that Heathrow Airport and law enforcement agencies invested heavily to safeguard the site, including redeploying 1,600 officer shifts at a cost exceeding £1 million to the public purse.

At the appeal hearing, Hallam and Maxey appeared via video links from HMP Wayland in Norfolk and HMP Fosse Way in Leicestershire respectively. Their legal representative, Henry Blaxland KC, advanced an argument that their conduct did not, in law, amount to the offence of causing a public nuisance. He contended that the agreed course of conduct was the act of flying drones, not the actual closure of Heathrow itself, and that the conspirators could not directly effect the airport's shutdown, which depended on the responses of third parties.

However, the court concluded the jury’s verdict was sound. Lord Justice William Davis stated that “none of the grounds of appeal provides any basis for overturning the convictions” and praised the jury’s decision as one they were fully entitled to make, noting that Hallam and Maxey had “stated their intentions in clear terms.” The ruling confirmed the convictions, dismissing the appeal in full.

The case adds to the legal challenges both activists have faced recently. In July last year, Hallam was sentenced to five years in prison (later reduced to four years by the Court of Appeal) over protests involving the disruption of traffic on the M25 motorway. Maxey, meanwhile, was jailed for three years in September 2023 after occupying tunnels beneath the road leading to the Navigator Oil Terminal in Essex.

While Hallam and Maxey claimed their drone protest was “merely a publicity exercise” and denied any intention to cause a public nuisance or close Heathrow, the courts concluded there was a deliberate conspiracy aimed at generating disruption to the nation’s busiest airport. Their convictions mark a significant moment in the ongoing legal response to direct action tactics employed by environmental activists in the UK.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ireland-live.ie/news/uk/1779542/extinction-rebellion-co-founder-loses-appeal-over-heathrow-drone-conspiracy.html> - This article supports the claim that Roger Hallam, co-founder of Extinction Rebellion, lost his appeal over the Heathrow drone conspiracy, which aimed to disrupt airport operations to draw attention to environmental concerns.
* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\_Hallam\_(activist)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Hallam_%28activist%29) - Wikipedia provides background information on Roger Hallam, including his role in co-founding Extinction Rebellion and his involvement in environmental activism, as well as his legal challenges.
* <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Court-of-Appeal-FINAL-JUDGMENT-R-v-MAXEY-and-HALLAM-202400258-B4-202400261-B4.pdf> - This Court of Appeal judgment document offers detailed insight into the legal proceedings and reasoning behind the upheld conviction of Hallam and Maxey regarding the drone conspiracy at Heathrow.
* <https://www.ireland-live.ie/news/uk/1779542/extinction-rebellion-co-founder-loses-appeal-over-heathrow-drone-conspiracy.html> - This article further explains the prosecution's claims that the drone disruption was intended to go viral, cause mass arrests, and publicize opposition to Heathrow's third runway expansion.
* [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger\_Hallam\_(activist)#M25\_blocking](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_Hallam_%28activist%29#M25_blocking) - This section of Roger Hallam's Wikipedia page details his legal challenges, including a five-year sentence (later reduced to four) for disrupting traffic on the M25 motorway.