

## Heathrow Community Noise Forum

Meeting notes (21 October 2020, 13:00 – 14:30, virtual meeting)

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### Confirmed attendees

<b>Name</b>	<b>Borough / Organisation</b>
Cllr Chris Turrell	Bracknell Forest Council
Cllr Wendy Matthews	Buckinghamshire Council
Steve Braund	Buckinghamshire Council
Bob McLellan	Englefield Green Action Group
Robert Buick	Englefield Green Action Group
John Stewart	HACAN
Armelle Thomas	Harmondsworth & Sipson Residents Association
Christine Taylor	Harmondsworth & Sipson Residents Association
Cllr Linda Burke	London Borough of Ealing
John Coates	London Borough of Richmond upon Thames
Graham Young	Richings Park Residents Association
Peter Willan	Richmond Heathrow Campaign
Cllr David Hilton	Royal Borough of Windsor & Maidenhead
Cllr Peter Szanto	Surrey County Council
Dave Gilbert	Teddington Action Group
Stephen Clark	Teddington Action Group
Kjeld Vinkx	To70
Spencer Norton	British Airways
Tim May	DfT
Rupert Basham	ICCAN
Howard Simmons	ICCAN
Sam Hartley	ICCAN
Robin Clarke	NATS
Becky Coffin	Heathrow
Jennifer Sykes	Heathrow
Laura Jones	Heathrow
Mike Glenn	Heathrow
Richard West	Heathrow

### Apologies

<b>Name</b>	<b>Borough / Organisation</b>
Paul Conway	Englefield Green Action Group
Deborah Petty	Molesey Residents Association
Barbara Perata-Smith	CAA
Ian Greene	DfT

## 1 Welcome and apologies for absence

- 1.1 Becky Coffin (BC), Director of Communities at Heathrow welcomed members to the virtual forum. She noted apologies for absence and observed that a number of members were also on furlough. She thanked everyone for their support as Heathrow tried out new technology to host a virtual forum while normal meetings were not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2 Business Update

- 2.1 BC gave an update on Heathrow's current business position, explaining that the impact of COVID-19 has been devastating to the aviation industry and is lasting longer than anyone had anticipated.
- 2.2 BC advised that passenger numbers during September 2020 were down 82% compared to the previous year, with 1.2 million people travelling via Heathrow, a loss of 5.5 million passengers over the course of the month. The lowest passenger numbers so far were in April 2020, with just 206,000 passengers in the whole month, 20,000 less than the average per day in April 2019. This had led to significant changes at the airport, moving to Single Runway Operations (SRO), consolidation to two terminals, and a large number of colleagues going on furlough.
- 2.3 BC explained that long haul markets, which are critical for UK exporters and a main source of inbound tourism, students and investment, remain closed by the 14-day quarantine policy. Cargo is down 28.2% compared to the same time last year, with more businesses struggling to export their products. Over the summer there were some improvements, but Heathrow did not see the recovery it had hoped for due to falling passenger confidence as a result of quarantine rules and fears of a second wave in Europe. The decline in passengers and cargo has left Heathrow in a position where costs exceed revenue by £5 million every single day. This means Heathrow is losing £35 million per week. Heathrow's half year results showed a loss of £1 billion. The latest forecasts from ACI (Airports Council International Europe) suggest that the industry is unlikely to return to 2019 levels until 2025.
- 2.4 BC advised that whilst flight numbers were low, Heathrow took the opportunity to carry out some extensive repair works to the southern runway which would not have been possible during a normal operation due to the length of time the runway needed to be closed. The works were completed on 3 October and the airport had returned to normal runway operations. Regular updates were provided throughout the works to keep communities and local stakeholders updated.
- 2.5 BC noted that Heathrow faces uncertainty over the winter period over how COVID-19 will affect flight numbers. This uncertainty means it is difficult to predict how operations will be impacted during winter. As a result, Heathrow will continuously review the situation and the implications for the airport. This may include further consolidation of operations including the possibility of returning to SRO if flight numbers significantly reduce from current volumes.
- 2.6 BC advised that Heathrow has had to take some difficult decisions to reduce costs to protect the business, reducing head office management by a third through compulsory redundancies, consolidating activities into two terminals and stopping all but essential capital expenditure. Many of Heathrow's planned infrastructure projects are now on hold but safety and security critical works continue. Heathrow has also been going through a consultation with its unions on the impacts for operational colleagues.

- 2.7 BC informed members that Matt Gorman had moved to a new role as Carbon Strategy Director and so will no longer chair the HCNF. Rick Norman (RN) is still in the Sustainability team but is currently on furlough. The organisational restructure has also resulted in a number of colleagues from the Airspace, Sustainability and Communities teams leaving the business. BC advised that Jennifer Sykes (JS) would talk through the new structure of the Operations team shortly. The Communities team has significantly reduced in size. For example, the team working on noise and airspace communications and engagement has reduced from five to two, namely Laura Jones (LJ) and Richard West (RW). As a result of this reduction in resources, Heathrow has to prioritise its work going forward. As previously outlined in July, Heathrow is undertaking a review of its community forums, programmes and workstreams and LJ will discuss this later in the meeting. Heathrow is clear that it needs to build on and maintain the good work and engagement that has been undertaken in recent years and it is important to listen and understand the key concerns from communities during this process. However, streamlining is necessary to ensure that resources are used where they can have the most impact and deliver the most value. BC reassured members that minimising the impact of noise remains an absolute priority for Heathrow and that the airport's commitment to working with communities to do that in the right way has not changed.
- 2.8 Members were invited to submit questions using the Q&A panel in Microsoft Teams. Bob McLellan (BM) asked why it had taken so long to test visitors into Heathrow for COVID-19. BC advised that throughout the process Heathrow has been following Public Health England (PHE) advice and Government policy. She added that Heathrow has proactively launched a testing facility to enable passengers to travel to destinations such as Hong Kong that require inbound passengers to have a negative COVID-19 test. Heathrow is lobbying for testing to be introduced to reduce the quarantine period and is working with the Government's task force on this. The Government have announced that they intend to see this happening before the end of this year. With regard to testing incoming passengers, in August Heathrow announced a joint venture with Collinson and Swissport for testing on arrival and this facility is ready and waiting for Government approval to be used. Tim May (TM) added that information on the Government's announcement on testing was available online [here](#).

### 3 Operational Update

- 3.1 Jennifer Sykes (JS) and Mike Glen (MG) presented an update on Heathrow's operations. The presentation is included with these meeting notes.
- 3.2 JS explained that there has been a large-scale reorganisation across the business. Dale Reeson is now Head of Airport Operations and Airspace and JS manages the Airspace, Noise and ATM Performance team which combines the responsibilities of the former Airspace team, Noise and Track Keeping team and the ATM (Air Transport Movement) Strategy team into one area.
- 3.3 Robert Buick (RBU) asked about the number of aircraft movements. JS presented a slide showing the number of daily ATMs during 2020 so far, showing a reduction from around 1,300 movements at the start of the year to less than 200 on some days in April, rising slightly in recent months as a result of the introduction of travel corridors with a number of countries.
- 3.4 JS advised that British Airways had operated their final Boeing 747 flights from Heathrow on 8<sup>th</sup> October, retiring them early as a result of the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. She added that further fleet mix changes were expected through the winter as the industry as a whole responds to the crisis.

- 3.5 JS provided further information about the southern runway repairs that took place during the downturn in traffic. She explained that the works were carried out in two phases. During phase 1 (13 July to 1 August) full closure of the southern runway was required so only the northern runway was in operation. During phase 2 (2 August to 3 October) the works only occurred overnight (Monday to Friday 8pm - 7am), so outside of these hours the published runway alternation schedule was followed.
- 3.6 MG presented a graph demonstrating how the number of late running flights has fallen significantly since COVID-19 restrictions have come into force, with airlines operating reduced schedules. Since March the monthly numbers of late runners have been in single figures and have been mainly due to aircraft technical reasons. Heathrow has also recently refused requests from some airlines to operate in the night period. He advised that Greek air traffic control strikes in October have had a small impact on late running flights.
- 3.7 MG explained that some airports, particularly in South America, have only been allowing one international arrival and departure per hour to allow them to carry out effective social distancing in the terminals. COVID-19 has therefore had an impact on the international flight network. He explained the complexity of schedules and time differences across international airports, and how in the same way that Heathrow has restrictions for operations at night, other airports do as well, so Heathrow has to fit in with other airports and their restrictions around the world. This is one of the main reasons that flights cannot just be moved back from 22:30 to 20:30 for example.
- 3.8 MG advised that the number of early morning arrivals (04:30 – 06:00) has also reduced dramatically, dropping from around 16 daily movements before the pandemic to between 4 and 7 daily movements. He explained that it is not possible for these arrivals to be moved to later in the day for the reason mentioned above. The early morning arrivals are all from the same destinations as seen before COVID-19 and are operating to similar schedules.
- 3.9 MG also presented a Noise KPI (Key Performance Indicator) Chart for September 2020 covering noise infringements, track keeping, minimum climb gradient requirements, Continuous Descent Approaches (CDA) and joining points on the final approach as specified in the UK AIP (Aeronautical Information Publication).
- 3.10 JS discussed Heathrow's airspace change programme, noting that the Airspace Change Proposal for Slightly Steeper Approaches had resumed, but that the other airspace and majority of operational projects were currently on pause as Heathrow focussed its efforts on recovering the operation from the impacts of COVID-19. She noted that Heathrow was currently reviewing its airspace programme and hoped to have an updated programme early next year.
- 3.11 Armelle Thomas (AT) asked how many aircraft movements and passengers there were at Heathrow in September. BC advised that Heathrow's data published last week showed there were 1.2 million passengers and 14,462 aircraft movements.
- 3.12 Stephen Clark (SC) asked what effort Heathrow had made to reduce late evening and night flights given the reduction in aircraft movements. MG advised that slots were arranged between Airport Coordination Limited (ACL) and the airlines and Heathrow was not able to influence them. However, a number of ad-hoc requests from airlines had been received for arrivals after 23:00 and Heathrow had turned these down. Although flight numbers are lower, Heathrow is still adhering to all night flight restrictions and will continue to monitor the situation.

- 3.13 RBU asked if Hong Kong had a restriction on departure times. JS advised that she would look into this. **ACTION JS**
- 3.14 BM asked if some airlines were flying on direct routes as the sky was less crowded. MG explained that there was a well-defined route network in the upper airspace structure, but aircraft can take a slightly more efficient route while staying within the confines of those routes. He added that holding times had dropped drastically, so some aircraft were being brought in more directly without needing to use the holding stacks. Spencer Norton (SN) added that more direct routes were being offered by Air Traffic Controllers, but these were high level en-route and certainly when clear of the Noise Preferential Routes (NPR) / Standard Instrument Departure (SID) routes.
- 3.15 Peter Willan (PW) asked if Heathrow would be producing Noise Action Plan (NAP) noise contours. BC advised that this question would be passed to RN and a response would be provided in due course. **ACTION RN**

## 4 Community Engagement and Noise

- 4.1 Rupert Basham (RBa), the Engagement Lead for ICCAN (Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise) gave a verbal on their work on community engagement and noise. He advised that COVID-19 had given ICCAN an opportunity to develop a piece of work to help airports engage more fully and effectively with local communities as they emerge from the crisis. He explained that they were looking at different methods of best practice to ensure airports continue to engage effectively on noise and improve their practices for the benefit of local communities.
- 4.2 RBa added that ICCAN would also be setting out recommendations for noise forums and had spoken to a number of airports to improve their knowledge base in this area. They will aim to publish their work later this year and make it available to HCNF members. They will also be publishing their next steps for ICCAN and aviation noise management on 23 October (available [here](#)) which will include a survey that they would encourage HCNF members to complete.

## 5 Heathrow Community Forums and Meetings

- 5.1 Laura Jones (LJ) discussed work being done to review Heathrow's external community forums and meetings as a result of the recent significant changes to the business and the subsequent change of priorities, focus and resources. This review will include the HCNF and will involve streamlining Heathrow's engagement to remove any overlap and duplication across meetings, ensure a wide range of views and broaden the diversity of engagement. She added that it was also important to create an environment where everyone felt comfortable to put forward their views.
- 5.2 LJ presented a chart showing all the current external community forums, their membership and the topics covered. These included the HCNF and its working group, the Local Focus Forum (LFF), 8 Local Liaison Groups, Poyle Business and Community Forum, Economic Development Forum / Local Recovery Forum, the Heathrow Community Engagement Board Independent Forum and its related sub-groups. The presentation is included with these meeting notes.
- 5.3 LJ assured members that despite the impacts of COVID-19 Heathrow remains committed to regular engagement and will be seeking feedback from members in the coming weeks and months as it works towards streamlining these forums.

- 5.4 CT asked what the Local Liaison Groups were currently doing, noting that she was in a group with Harmondsworth and Sipson and was not aware of anything in Harlington. BC advised that the groups had met just before lockdown in March but had not had the opportunity to meet since then. Heathrow's Community Engagement team has been sending regular updates and community bulletins to members, but the groups were currently on pause as Heathrow works out the best way forward.

## 6 Community Slot – Reducing Departure Noise

- 6.1 BC presented a summary on behalf of Dave Gilbert (DG) who was unable to present due to a technical issue. The presentation provided an update on a study that was being carried out by the forum's independent technical advisor, Kjeld Vinkx (KV) of To70, into reducing departure noise. The presentation is included with these meeting notes. BC noted that the work was being overseen by RN at the working group and understood that it was his intention for the work to be shared at the forum. This will therefore be discussed with RN to work out the best way forward. **ACTION RN**
- 6.2 Sam Hartley (SH) asked if KV was being kept on as technical advisor. BC explained that Heathrow had advised members in July that KV's contract would not be extended due to the operational and financial impact of COVID-19. She added that the decision would be kept under review and hoped that members would understand Heathrow's current situation and the vast range of changes that are having to be made. BM felt that it was short sighted not to continue KV's contract and that Heathrow should treat this as a key message to say they care for communities. BC appreciated his point of view but reiterated that Heathrow was currently losing £5 million per day so has had to take extremely wide-ranging and difficult decisions across the business, prioritising keeping passengers safe and protecting jobs.

## 7 AOB

- 7.1 BC went through questions submitted by members in advance of the meeting. AT had asked why, at a time when Heathrow is operating dramatically under capacity, were residents still experiencing noise from flights after 11pm. Bridget Bell (Plane Hell Action Group) had also asked why residents were being woken by early morning arrivals from 4.30am when there is such under-capacity. She suggested that these flights could arrive closer to 7am, with flights from airports such as Hong Kong departing later as the flight path is not over any residential community and would not disturb anyone. BC advised that MG had addressed these questions during the operational update and recapped that the question about Hong Kong departure time restrictions would be looked into.
- 7.2 Christine Taylor (CT) had asked why engine testing still happened during the night-time hours, such as on the 15th September 02.00 to 02.08, at an ear-piercing volume. RW noted that the Engine Ground Run (EGR) log showed an engine test had taken place a little earlier, so it was possible this was what she had heard. He explained that it was sometimes necessary to run one or more engines while an aircraft is on the ground to ensure it is working safely following planned or unplanned maintenance. For any planned maintenance, airlines are required to schedule their maintenance to take place during normal operational hours to reduce any associated noise and safety impacts. However, with airlines operating reduced fleets owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, maintenance can sometimes only take place during the night period to ensure that the aircraft is available for a morning departure. Any high-power engine runs during the night have to take place in an acoustic pen and all testing requires permission from the airport authority prior to the engine run taking place. CT responded that she suspected the acoustic pen was not used and asked for this to be checked. **ACTION RW**

- 7.3 BC turned to questions and comments submitted by members in the Q&A panel during the meeting. BM commented that consultations were critical and asked Heathrow to use virtual meetings more frequently during this period to show that they were serious about engaging. BC thanked him for the feedback and advised that Heathrow would look at how to continue with this going forward.
- 7.4 CT referred to comments that Hong Kong had managed to get through COVID-19 quicker than the UK. She advised that the Transport Select Committee on 10 June had heard from Professor Gabriel Leung, Dean of Medicine at the University of Hong Kong who detailed measures, such as all inbound passengers having to have PCR testing and wait for results. If positive they would go into isolation or hospital, and if negative they would go into compulsory enforced 14-day quarantine. She suggested that Heathrow had acknowledged this appeared to have worked. BC responded that this was not exactly what had been said but Heathrow had acknowledged the different situations that different countries around the world were in. With regard to CT's specific examples, BC said that the Government was considering and evaluating all the evidence to work out the safest and most appropriate way for the UK to move forward and that was a matter of Government policy.
- 7.5 AT noted that LFF members had been asked for feedback on the way their forum was conducted. She mentioned difficulties with Microsoft Teams and being unable to talk, saying that this was not engagement and that other online meetings enabled members to speak. Peter Szanto (PS) suggested that Zoom would be a better tool. BC thanked members for providing comments and feedback in the Q&A panel and acknowledged that none of the available tools were perfect. RW added that Heathrow was still learning on this and would continue to look for ways to improve moving forward.
- 7.6 Peter Willan (PW) observed that members may be responding to the DfT's night flight consultation before the next meeting and asked for more information. TM confirmed that the DfT expects to consult on the night flight regime later this year as the current rules expire in 2022.
- 7.7 RBu asked for the position regarding the publication of SoNA Night. BC advised that this was a question for the CAA and would be followed up after the meeting. **ACTION RW**
- 7.8 BC thanked members for participating. She encouraged members to share feedback after the meeting and advised that meeting notes and presentations would be circulated within two weeks.