

Heathrow Community Noise Forum - 2 March 2015

2pm-5pm, Heathrow Academy - meeting notes

Attendees

Name	Borough
Cllr Chris Turrell	Bracknell
Geoff Paxton	Bracknell
Cllr Paul Conlan	Ealing
Margaret Majumdar	Ealing
Cllr Steve Bax	Elmbridge
Neil Luxton	Elmbridge
Ajit Bansal	Hounslow
Cllr Wendy Matthews	South Bucks
Graham Young	South Bucks
John Coates	Richmond
Peter Willan,	Richmond
Natasha Fletcher	Richmond
Kathleen Croft	Spelthorne
Cllr David Hilton	Windsor & Maidenhead
Cllr Pat Roberts	Runnymede
Paul Conway	Runnymede
Rosalie James	Surrey Heath
John Stewart	HACAN
Kate Jennings	Department for Transport
Darren Rhodes	CAA
Ian Jopson	NATS
Dan Foster	NATS
Dave Curtis	NATS
Captain Dean Plumb	British Airways
Matt Gorman	Heathrow
Jane Dawes	Heathrow
Cheryl Monk	Heathrow
Richard Norman	Heathrow
Laura Jones	Heathrow
Apologies	
Cllr Keith Bush	Surrey Heath
Cllr Amrit Mann	Hounslow
Conrad Sturt	Surrey Heath

1. **Welcome and introductions:** members were invited to introduce themselves and stated what they were hoping that the CNF would achieve.

2. Heathrow: Noise management and operations: An overview

Presentations were given by the following

- Kate Jennings, Dft – Policy governing Heathrow and aircraft noise
- Darren Rhodes, CAA – CAA's role as independent noise regulator.
- Dan Foster, NATS – Managing operations and airspace.
- Rick Norman, Heathrow – Heathrow's approach to noise management.
- Dean Plumb, BA – An airline's perspective.

The presentations have been distributed to members.

Dan Foster offered a half day familiarisation at Heathrow at the ATC tower for members of the forum. Members that are interested in taking this up were asked to contact Cheryl Monk.

The floor was opened for discussion.

Cllr Hilton asked if the CAA's responsibility for airspace ceased at 4,000ft. Darren Rhodes responded that the CAA is responsible for all UK airspace.

For information the guidelines state that when considering airspace change requests, the CAA should keep in mind the following altitude-based priorities:

- a) in the airspace from the ground to 4,000 feet the Government's environmental priority is to minimise the noise impact of aircraft and the number of people on the ground significantly affected by it;
- b) where options for route design below 4,000 feet are similar in terms of impact on densely populated areas the value of maintaining legacy arrangements should be taken into consideration;
- c) in the airspace from 4,000 feet to 7,000 feet, the focus should continue to be minimising the impact of aviation noise on densely populated areas, but the CAA may also balance this requirement by taking into account the need for an efficient and expeditious flow of traffic that minimises emissions;
- d) in the airspace above 7,000 feet, the CAA should promote the most efficient use of airspace with a view to minimising aircraft emissions and mitigating the impact of noise is no longer a priority;
- e) where practicable, and without a significant detrimental impact on efficient aircraft operations or noise impact on populated areas, airspace routes below 7,000 feet should, where possible, be avoided over Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and National Parks as per Chapter 8.1 of this Guidance; and
- f) all changes below 7,000 feet should take into account local circumstances in the development of airspace structures.

For more info see:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/269527/air-navigation-guidance.pdf

Cllr Hilton asked for clarification whether the airlines chose which departure route they flew.

It was explained that the decision about which of the six departure routes aircraft take is largely dictated by the destination of the flight but there are a number of other factors that influence this too including international situations (so for example many airlines now avoid flying over Russian airspace since the Malaysian aircraft was shot down last year); the availability of the route (for example if airspace en-route is closed) and the route charges (countries charge airlines for flying through their airspace).

It was explained that Heathrow has no power to dictate which route the airline takes. Heathrow is responsible for declaring the capacity of its runways (i.e. how many planes can take and land off from it each hour) which determines the number of slots available.

Dan Foster explained that aircraft are required to follow the routes (known as Noise Preferential Routes) until they reach 4,000ft. From here NATS are able to direct aircraft from the route.

Cllr Hilton expressed his concern that jets had never flown over areas such as Ascot prior to the trials and that there was a credibility gap between what was being said and what residents were experiencing.

Members were keen to understand how over usage of particular routes is prevented if it is up to the airlines which route they use.

Ian Jopson explained that if one route is too busy, airlines would have to choose between delaying their flight or using another route. In practice he says it is self limiting since only a certain number of aircraft can depart from any one departure route per day. It is very rare that capacity is reached on particular routes as aircraft departing from Heathrow are departing south, west, east and north.

A question was asked what the impact would be on the shape of the contour if there was a fundamental shift in route usage. Rick Norman confirmed this would be reflected in the contour.

A question was asked if there was scope to balance out the number of flights that use each route. Matt Gorman explained that presently it was not the responsibility of the airport, NATS, CAA or the Govt to dictate which of the six departure routes the airlines chose. This choice was made by the airlines.

The discussion then turned to night flights. It was noted that a significant number of heavy jets head south between 10-11pm. It was acknowledged that this is true on account that many of these flights are heading to long haul destinations such as South East Asia.

There were concerns that night restrictions and curfews at other international airports take priority over Heathrow. Darren Rhodes said this was not the case and in fact it

was the other way around, i.e. that many airports across the world have departures in the middle of the night in order for airlines to comply with Heathrow's restrictions.

Ms James mentioned the comments of one of Heathrow Airports Shareholders, that were made a couple of years ago suggesting that there should be 24 hour flying at Heathrow.

Matt Gorman reassured her that Mr Al-Baker's views were his own and do not represent the views or policy of the Heathrow Board or Executive Committee. At the time that the comments were made Heathrow issued a statement which confirmed that "Round the clock flying from London is not an option. We take the concerns of west London residents very seriously and have never argued for 24 hour flying."

Ms James asked the DfT what was meant by 'significant' in the context of future changes to flight paths. Kate Jennings explained that the assessment of significance is done on a case by case basis depending on the nature of the change proposed. More information about the Airspace change process can be found in the Department for Transport's Air Navigation Guidance and CAA guidance on airspace change.

Peter Willan was interested to understand what the impact would be of a substantial increase in larger aircraft like the A380 using Heathrow. Matt Gorman said that where we are forecasting some increase in large aircraft like A380s, as long as Heathrow remains a hub airport there needs to be a balance of short-haul and long-haul aircraft.

The issue of respite was discussed and whether it was better to concentrate noise on people who already experience it or share the noise but in the process, affect less people.

Paul Conway asked if an aircraft overflew a community and the next one was offset by a mile whether the noise pollution created by the second aircraft would still be considered significant. Rick Norman said it wasn't possible to answer this without further analysis but that was the sort of issue that Heathrow was exploring with future airspace design.

Cllr Hilton stated that his view was that no community should be affected by anymore aircraft noise than they experienced before the trials. He asked if airlines were using PBN now.

Cllr Hilton said that during the trials aircraft were following concentrated routes during the trials. He wanted to understand what the difference was now.

Peter Willan asked why noise contours aren't produced for each departure route. He also asked about 'curved approaches' and how close to the airport aircraft could do this.

For info, the current rules set out minimum joining points for aircraft on the final approach. On westerly operations between 06:00-23:00 aircraft have to be established on the Instrument Landing System (ILS) by 2,500ft (this equates to

around 7.5 nautical miles from touchdown). Between 23:00-06:00 they must be established on the ILS at 3,000ft and not less than 10 nautical miles from touchdown. This is DfT policy so any change in these procedures would be led by government. The requirements were put in place for noise reasons (to avoid aircraft turning on to the ILS much closer and lower). The night time requirements came in during the 1990s.

It is thought that this minimum distance could be reduced in the future. Heathrow has assumed that this could be reduced to 4 nautical miles in the future which would allow for more respite opportunities at distances further out. However this is all still to be determined.

Cllr Bax asked what happens to older aircraft when airlines replace them with new fleets and asked whether other airlines buy them and therefore still operate noisy aircraft into Heathrow. Matt Gorman said that Heathrow tends to attract the 'best in class' fleets at Heathrow. He explained the aircraft that airlines use at Heathrow are on average around 15% quieter than the total global fleets of those airlines.

Christine Taylor asked how areas of outstanding beauty are designated since these are taken into account when deciding changes to flight paths and that this is a subjective judgement. It was explained that this was an official government designation.

3. Data verification

Darren Rhodes gave a presentation on how data is used for noise modelling and monitoring. A copy of this presentation has been emailed to members.

He explained that information on flight data is provided through the Noise and Track Keeping (NTK) System. This is a shared system jointly operated by CAA and Heathrow. The CAA validates the system. The NTK system is the same system that feeds Heathrow's webtrak system.

He explained that the system is an accurate source of information since the system takes its data from the NATS radar feed. As part of validation of the systems the information is validated against 1) satellite-based position information broadcast by most aircraft (Mode S ADS-B) 2) Flight Data Recorder (FDR) information and 3) Flight Calibration aircraft. He explained that for this reason the Webtrak system is far more reliable than third party apps like Flight Radar 24.

It was recognised that the issues presented were very technical and that time would need to be given at future meetings of the Forum to revisit these issues.

It was asked why Heathrow's Webtrak data is only available for the past 90 days and whether it would be possible to have it going back longer.

Rick Norman explained that the original intention of the Webtrak system was to enable people to search for individual aircraft events they have been bothered by and make complaints about them, which is why 90 days data was felt sufficient. The same system is used at other international airports and 90 days is the standard

period used. However Matt Gorman said that we would take this request away and consider it.

Matt Gorman brought the meeting to a close, acknowledging that not all the agenda items had been discussed due to lack of time. It was agreed that the next meeting should take place within the next 6-8 weeks so that members could discuss the issue of data verification in more detail and options for its independent verification.

Matt Gorman thanked everyone for attending.

Date of next meeting: 13 April 2015 - 2-5pm, Heathrow Academy.