

Noise and Airspace Community Forum (NACF)

Meeting Notes (27 Sep 2023, 13:00-16:00, London Heathrow Marriott)

Confirmed attendees

Name	Borough / Organisation
Andreas Lambrianou	Chair
David Hilton	Ascot Parish Council
Cllr Dr Wendy Matthews	Buckinghamshire Council
Darren Rhodes	CAA
John Burton	CAA
Liji Mohan	CAA
Laura Keith *	CISHA
Ian Greene	DfT
Alison Ashworth *	DfT
Gary Marshall *	DfT
Rob Buick	Englefield Green Action Group
Paul Conway	Englefield Green Action Group
Nigel Davies	Englefield Green Action Group
Christine Taylor	Harmondsworth and Sipson Residents Association
Armelle Thomas	Harmondsworth and Sipson Residents Association
Becky Coffin	Heathrow
Lisa Forshew	Heathrow
Andy Knight	Heathrow
Richard West	Heathrow
Samantha Fountain *	Heathrow
Pierre Sohier *	Heathrow
Michael Thornton *	Heathrow Strategic Planning Group
Dr John Lees *	Iver Village Residents Association
Colin Stanbury *	Local Authorities Aircraft Noise Council
Cllr John Martin	London Borough of Ealing
Surinderpal Suri *	London Borough of Ealing
Paul Baker *	London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham
Sam Greehy *	London Borough of Hounslow
Amanda Nicholls *	London Borough of Lewisham
Deborah Petty	Molesey Residents Association
Robin Clarke *	NATS
Bridget Bell	Plane Hell Action
Graham Young	Richings Park Residents Association
Peter Willan *	Richmond Heathrow Campaign
Cllr. Mark Howard	Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead
Sue Janota *	Surrey County Council
Stephen Clark	Teddington Action Group
Ben Fenech	UK HSA
Peter Killwick *	Verita
Kieran Seale *	Verita
Carole Marr *	Windlesham Society
Cllr Malcolm Richards *	Wokingham Borough Council

* *Attended online*

Apologies

Spencer Norton	British Airways
Steve Braund	Buckinghamshire Council
Margaret Majumdar	Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group
Paul Beckford	HACAN
Mike Glen	Heathrow
Rick Norman	Heathrow
Pete Glass	NATS
Ian Jopson	NATS
David Matthews	NATS
Cllr Chris Howorth	Runnymede Borough Council
Cllr Sean Beatty	Spelthorne Borough Council

1 Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Andreas Lambrianou (AL) welcomed members and guest speakers to the forum.
- 1.2 AL reviewed the meeting notes from the previous forum on 27 July 2023. He noted that an amendment had been requested by Sam Fountain (SF) to change the time mentioned in para. 2.1 from 23:00 to 23:30. No other comments were received. AL confirmed that the meeting notes would be updated and marked as final.
- 1.3 AL provided updates on the actions from previous meetings as detailed below.
- 1.4 **Update wording on the data dashboard (2.2 07/23).** AL confirmed that this has now been done and the latest dashboard will be presented later in the meeting. He added that the dashboard was now available to download from Heathrow's website [here](#).
- 1.5 **Independent review of Heathrow's noise complaints process (1.14 05/23).** AL advised that the Council for the Independent Scrutiny of Heathrow Airport (CISHA) had appointed Verita to carry out this review and they will provide an update later in the meeting.
- 1.6 **Invite health bodies to join the forum (1.15 05/23).** AL noted that Defra did not have the capacity to commit to regular attendance at the NACF as their noise team already feeds into a number of DfT-led aviation noise stakeholder groups. Following the meeting the UK Health Security Agency (UK HSA) confirmed that they would attend future forums related to health.
- 1.7 **Appoint advisor for scoping night flight study (3.19 05/23)** – AL advised that this was in progress and that he would also establish a panel of experts to advise on technical matters.
- 1.8 Bridget Bell (BB) requested that a list of attendees, organisations and roles should be made available at the time of the meeting. AL advised that a list of members was provided in the previous meeting notes and asked new members and guests to introduce themselves when speaking for the first time.

2 Data Dashboard

- 2.1 SF presented Heathrow's operational KPI dashboard covering the period August 2022 to August 2023. These can be downloaded from Heathrow's website [here](#).

- 2.2 SF noted that track keeping compliance had been lower during May and June during long periods of easterly operations due to historical issues with the Compton (CPT) easterly departure route. Rob Buick (RB) asked why track keeping on the CPT route was so much lower than other routes. SF explained that NATS air traffic controllers have to manually direct aircraft using this route to separate them from arrivals coming in from one of the holding stacks. Lisa Forshew (LF) added that there were plans to redesign the route as part of the airspace modernisation process.
- 2.3 SF advised that there had been 92 nights without late runners so far in 2023, compared to 79 for the same period in 2022. PW thought that night flights had been landing over Richmond more often than usual during the last few weeks. SF offered to provide statistics on adherence to the night-time runway alternation programme. **ACTION SF**

3 Deep Dive: Health Impacts

- 3.1 AL introduced the forum's deep dive session on the topic of health impacts, noting that presentations would be given by Ben Fenech (BF) from UK HSA, Ian Greene (IG) from DfT and Stephen Clark (SC) from Teddington Action Group.
- 3.2 BF gave a presentation on the current understanding of aviation noise impacts on health from scientific research. The presentation was circulated to members prior to the meeting.
- 3.3 BF noted that annoyance from aviation noise had been researched in detail for the past 50-60 years but was still a topic of active debate. He disagreed with criticism that the UK's Survey of Noise Attitudes (SoNA) was a flawed study, noting that all studies had their limitations and that the WHO Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region 2018 recommended that data and exposure-response curves derived in a local context should be applied whenever possible.
- 3.4 BF noted that possible interventions included reducing noise exposure by reducing emissions or installing noise insulation, changing noise exposure by changing the distribution of flights temporally or spatially, and non-acoustic factors. However, he noted that there was currently little evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of these interventions.
- 3.5 Becky Coffin (BC) advised that Heathrow was looking to undertake a local noise annoyance study and asked how to make it work for all stakeholders. BF suggested that one important aspect would be to get all stakeholders involved at the design stage to establish what the outputs should be.
- 3.6 Deborah Petty (DP) asked about the minimum sample sizes that should be considered for studies. BF was reluctant to provide a number but suggested that sample sizes depend on the health outcome under investigation and the study design – for cohort studies looking at cardiovascular and metabolic outcomes they are typically in the 10,000s or 100,000s, noting however that sample sizes for studies from Scandinavian airports were smaller because of the size of the population exposed.
- 3.7 Christine Taylor (CT) asked about the effect of night-time engine testing on residential areas close to the airport. BF explained that gathering evidence on the effect of noise on cardiovascular disease close to the airport would be difficult as it would require large sample sizes of 100,000s of people.

- 3.8 Michael Thornton (MT) referred to a table in the presentation showing the status of research on other health outcomes (slide 18) and asked if the colour-coding could be used for comparison purposes. BF advised that the slide was only intended as a proof of concept to consider whether such a scorecard would be useful.
- 3.9 Surinderpal Suri (SS) asked how noise exposure could be reduced around airports given that noise insulation takes a long time to implement and can be ineffective. BF highlighted the lack of evidence on the effectiveness of noise insulation and suggested that it may work for some but not all, so it should be just one of many interventions. SS asked about the combined effect of noise and air pollution. BF advised that evidence was just starting to emerge, noting that noise and air pollution operated on different pathways but there could be some interaction.
- 3.10 IG presented an overview of the government's policy development process and how it is applied to aviation noise policy. He explained that policy was required to strike a balance between the impacts of aviation noise on health, quality of life and productivity against the benefits of enabling travel opportunities, supporting business and transporting freight. He noted that the process of reviewing noise policy took place either as part of wider reforms, if measures were time-limited, if monitoring and evaluation flagged concerns, or if there was new material evidence. The presentation was circulated to members prior to the meeting.
- 3.11 BB asked why the industry wanted to implement Performance Based Navigation (PBN) before the impact of concentrated flight paths was properly understood. IG explained that health impacts were one of a number of factors that were involved in policy decisions. He added that it was incorrect to state that the effects of PBN were not known, noting that Heathrow's current arrival flight paths were effectively concentrated flight paths.
- 3.12 DP asked how policy could be implemented consistently from one government to the next. IG explained that the evidence remained the same regardless of government, noting that there had been little change in aviation policy since the Conservatives took over from Labour in 2010.
- 3.13 PW asked why the government had not responded to WHO targets. IG explained that the WHO guidelines were ambitions focussed on health impacts but there were many other factors to consider, including the economic cost of achieving those targets. Therefore it was unlikely that the latest WHO guidelines would ever be adopted as an absolute target by government.
- 3.14 SS asked if developing regional airports would be a more effective way of reducing noise exposure at Heathrow. IG noted that this had the potential of just transferring the problem elsewhere. He explained that government policy was for regional airports to make the best use of their existing runways, so there was a push from government to make sure of that, but it was not solely based on the issue of managing noise.
- 3.15 SC offered a community perspective regarding aviation health impacts. He discussed Heathrow's poor location for a hub airport, the threat of Airspace Modernisation to living conditions and how major changes in UK airspace were being considered without an understanding of the impacts or an accepted and trusted evidence base. He highlighted recommendations for better governance, independent research, new metrics, trust and better engagement. He called for further research on mental health impacts, child development, sleep loss, the effect of change, higher noise levels and the best use of respite. The presentation was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

- 3.16 AL asked which areas should be targeted for research and how credibility could be ensured with all stakeholders. SC responded that research should move away from average noise levels and that proper engagement with stakeholders was needed.
- 3.17 DP suggested that wearable technology could be used to measure sleep cycles and heart activity of those affected by aircraft noise.
- 3.18 Cllr Mark Howard (MH) expressed concern over the independence, robustness and scale of studies and suggested that there should be an opportunity for the whole local population to be involved.
- 3.19 RB stated that health agencies should be involved in making policy, adding that they played a minor and subservient roll to the DfT, without consideration of the precautionary principles in regard to aircraft noise costs in health terms, including those costs, externality costs, not born by the industry, but by communities and the National Health Service. IG responded that DfT worked with Defra and other relevant departments on noise policy, noting that government policy was subject to collective agreement across the Cabinet.
- 3.20 BF acknowledged the need for continued research, noting that while the adverse effects of noise had been known for a long time, the link to cardiovascular disease has not been known for very long.
- 3.21 David Hilton (DH) observed that noise reduction tended to occur in small incremental changes rather than fundamental shifts and expected that to continue. He added that future changes should not make the situation worse and warned that this was one of the potential issues of introducing PBN.
- 3.22 PW commented that there was very little research on the pattern of noise, highlighting the difference between being interrupted from reading a book every ten seconds and being interrupted for three minutes at the end. He recommended the use of conjoint analysis for this type of research.
- 3.23 DP proposed researching the effect of noise during the night-time, early morning and shoulder periods on children's health and education. She also suggested that the government should add a question about annoyance to the census.

4 Community Questions

- 4.1 BB presented a community perspective of the health impacts of aviation. She dwelt on the impact of sleep deprivation, feeling so tired that she was often in tears, woken at 04:30 with 60+dB aircraft concentrated and low over her house and within the intrusive vicinity for 19 hours, building up towards 07:00 and continuing until 23:00/23:30 at 45-second to 3-minute intervals. She stated that PBN should not be rolled out before research on aircraft noise impacts on health is truly understood, including the plight of those under more than one flight path such as arrivals to Heathrow and London City.
- 4.2 LF advised her that Heathrow would be working with London City Airport on the latter issue, noting that one of Heathrow's design principles for airspace modernisation was to seek to avoid overflying the same communities with multiple routes, including those to and from other airports.

- 4.3 WM asked Heathrow to consider those living close to the airport. She stated that she had virtually no sleep on a number of occasions due to late running flights, engine ground runs and early morning arrivals, noting that sleep deprivation was used as an instrument of torture in some regimes. She added that respite was not achievable for those living close to the airport who could hear every flight from start of roll to after take-off for departures and similarly for arrivals including reverse thrust and taxiing. AL advised that night flights would be the main topic of the next forum.
- 4.4 CT complained about night-time engine testing. AL reminded her that this topic was being covered in the Local Community Forum to avoid duplication, but he would reconsider which forum was the most appropriate. PC thought that testing engines in the middle of the night close to communities was grossly unacceptable.
- 4.5 RB gave a presentation on the social cost of aviation, noting that the cost to health, productivity and property depreciation were borne by the population and society as a whole. He cited reports on the social cost of aviation in France and asked how this compared to Heathrow and the UK.
- 4.6 AL reminded members that part of the expert panel resource would be used to provide a suggested scope of a study on the economics of night flights.

5 Noise Complaints Process Review

- 5.1 Peter Killwick (PK) and Kieran Seale (KS) from Verita advised that they were in the process of carrying out an independent review of Heathrow's handling of noise complaints following a request from the NACF chair. They advised that the objective of the work was to conduct an overview assessment of the performance of the noise complaint function, to review the policies and procedures that were in place, to assess them against the outputs produced by the noise complaints team, and to provide recommendations for their improvement.
- 5.2 Laura Keith (LK) added that the review had been commissioned by CISHA and advised that members who were interested in contributing to the project at an early stage could join a further meeting on Thursday 5 October.
- 5.3 DP asked if the study would consider sanctions for bad behaviour by airlines. PK explained that the study would look at the internal function of the complaints system and whether Heathrow was providing the community with an effective and efficient means of making complaints and getting satisfactory results. He noted that this could possibly fall under the satisfactory results part of the study, but that was yet to be determined.
- 5.4 Nigel Davies (ND) suggested that some community members did not bother complaining because of a lack of trust.
- 5.5 PW asked how far back the study would go and whether it would correlate the complaints with the events that caused them. PK advised that first they would need to establish the art of the possible but noted that this was the sort of conversation they hoped to have at the further meeting on 5 October.

6 AOB

- 6.1 No other business was raised.

Date of next meeting

- Wed 29 November (13:00-16:00) - London Heathrow Marriott Hotel, Hayes, UB3 5AN.