

The Government's new airspace policy, published 24th October, contains has lot of measures to be welcomed and indeed measures which an organisation like HACAN has campaigned for over many years.

1. An independent noise authority. ICCAN (Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise). To be set up by Spring 2018.

"The body will help ensure that the noise impacts of airspace changes are properly considered and give communities a greater stake in noise management. In order to ensure appropriate measures are being taken to address aviation noise issues, a review of ICCAN within two years of set-up will include further consideration of statutory powers for the body. We have listened to the concerns raised through the consultation process and have decided that ICCAN will be set up as a new non departmental public body of the DfT, rather than an independent body within the CAA".

2. Reducing noise, rather than tacking CO2 emissions, to be the priority between 4,000 and 7,000 ft (It is already the priority below 4,000 ft)

"We have noted the numerous responses raising concerns with the ABPs, particularly on the priority between 4000ft and 7000ft. We have therefore updated the guidance to make it clearer that, in this volume of airspace, noise is the environmental priority, although the CAA takes into account CO2 emissions if it considers that these would be disproportionately increased".

3. New, more accurate noise metrics to be adopted. Out goes the much-criticised 57 LAeq metric (where noise averages out at 57 decibels over a 16 hour day) as the point where aircraft noise starts to seriously disturb people. **In comes 54 LAeq** and an acknowledgement that serious disturbance can begin at **51 LAeq**. The new metrics are based on the findings of a recent CAA study commissioned by the DfT:

<https://publicapps.caa.co.uk/docs/33/CAP%201506%20FEB17.pdf> In geographical terms around Heathrow 57 didn't even include Fulham and Putney; 54 goes as far as Clapham and Vauxhall; 51 takes us to around Peckham. It still doesn't capture everybody annoyed by the planes and, in particular – because it is an annual average - it doesn't cover places like Ealing or Teddington that only get planes for about 30% of the year but when they do get them they are very annoying! But this is an historic change – HACAN has been campaigning for the end of the 57 contour since the Terminal 5 Inquiry, over 20 years ago!

4. Frequency metrics also to be used. For the first time official policy that metrics which average out the noise may not be sufficient in themselves. It recognizes that the number of planes going overhead is important.

"Frequency of noise is important and supplementing this risk-based approach with the frequency-based noise metrics will ensure that aircraft noise and its impacts can be accurately factored into decisions."

6. The Secretary of State has been given call-in powers over flight path changes.

"A new Secretary of State Call In Power on airspace changes of national importance, providing high level direction and a democratic back-stop on the most significant airspace change decisions, something much called for by communities."

More detail on the new airspace policy can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653801/consultation-response-on-uk-airspace-policy-web-version.pdf

7. The use of multiple flight paths to provide respite is recognized as a legitimate option.

*“Single and multiple routes both have costs and benefits associated with them. In terms of noise, a single route will, generally, tend to affect fewer people overall compared to multiple routes. It may mean however that more people are exposed to higher levels of noise where there is a greater risk of adverse effects, than if noise was more dispersed. As stated in section 1.3 above, decisions on how aircraft noise is best shared should be informed by local circumstances and consideration of the different options that are deemed to be practicable. This consideration should include the pros and cons of concentrating traffic on single routes which normally reduce the number of people overflown, versus the use of multiple routes which can potentially provide relief or respite from noise but increase the number of people overflown overall. **This means there will be situations when multiple routes, that expose more people overall to noise but to a lesser extent, may be better from a noise perspective**”.*

More on this at

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/653978/air-navigation-guidance-2017.pdf