

Night Flight Consultation 2017

HACAN Briefing

The current night flight regime at the UK's three designated airports – Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted – ends in October 2017. The Department for Transport (DfT) is consulting on a new regime to cover the period 2017 – 2022.

The consultation document can be found at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/582863/night-flight-restrictions-at-heathrow-gatwick-and-stansted.pdf

How to respond

The closing date for responses is 28th February.

The DfT is encouraging people to respond online: <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/J6KX6/>

But responses can be emailed to night.flights@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Or posted to Night Flights Consultation Department for Transport Great Minster House (1/25) Horseferry Road London SW1P 4DR

When responding, you are asked state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation.

What the consultation is proposing

No change in the number of flights allowed between 11.30pm and 6am at Heathrow

For many years now the number of scheduled flights allowed each night, averaged over the year, is 16. They are all arrivals, with the first flight landing around 4.30am. Strictly speaking “night” is defined as 11pm to 7am but the period for which the restrictions apply, known as the “night quota” period, just runs from 11.30pm until 6am.

The new regime lasts for 5 years

This would take it up to 2022. By then it should be clear whether a third runway has overcome all its hurdles. If it has, it is probable it will be in the process of being built. The Government has said that one of the conditions of Heathrow being allowed to build a third runway is that it will have to agree to a tougher night flight regime. It is proposing a ban on scheduled flights from 11pm – 5.30am. Heathrow has said that, if it gets permission for the new runway, it may bring in a tougher night flight regime in advance of the third runway opening.

A new category - QC/0.125 – to be introduced for planes flying at night

This is a little complex. There have always been some quieter planes which have been exempt from the movements total. Until now, this has not really mattered because such planes have not used Heathrow at night. But, with planes becoming less noisy, this could change. The introduction of this new category ensures that these quieter planes will no longer be exempt and that, if they do use Heathrow at night, they will be automatically included in the movements total. This is welcome.

Comments

- Many will be disappointed that there is not a ban on flights proposed between at least 11pm and 6am from October 2017. Some, indeed, will argue for an eight hour ban from 11pm – 7am. The World Health Organisation (WHO) argues that an eight hour night is important. It quotes studies such as that undertaken by the Centre for Time Use Research, 2006 www.timeuse.org/access/ which show that the average time adults are in bed is around 7.5 hours. The WHO evidence indicates the value there would be of an 8 hour ban. It is probably not realistic to expect the DfT to introduce an eight hour ban in October 2017 as over 60 flights use the airport between 6am and 7am. That is not to argue that people cannot call for it. But we can certainly argue that anything less than a 7 hour ban (the length of time the average person is asleep) would be very hard to justify.
- It is encouraging, though, that the number of planes allowed between 11.30pm and 6am has not been increased. The number has stayed the same for about 25 years. Airlines fight hard for these 16 flights as they are hugely profitable to them. Residents bitterly resent them. Most groups have exerted considerable pressure on the DfT. The first sign any movement came when the Airports Commission recommended no flights between 11.30pm and 6am if a third runway was built. The Commission argued that the new runway provided the capacity to allow the pre-6am flights to land just after 6am.
- All the studies point in the same direction: that sleep disturbance can have an impact on a person's health. There is still some uncertainty as to the extent of that impact, particularly over the long term. And insufficient work has been done on the impact on mental health. But here is enough evidence for a night flight ban to be introduced on health and annoyance grounds – see *Aircraft Noise and Public Health – the evidence is loud and clear* - <http://hacan.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Aircraft-Noise-and-Public-Health-the-evidence-is-loud-and-clear-final-reportONLINE.pdf>
- The introduction of the new category QC/0.125 is welcome as it ensures that none of the aircraft which will potentially use Heathrow at night will be exempt from the movements limit.
- There are clear economic benefits of night flights. This is the conclusion of all the studies which have been carried out including *A Ban on Night Flights at Heathrow Airport*, the 2011 CE Delft study commissioned by HACAN. Less work has been done on how many of these economic benefits would disappear if the flights currently landing between 4.30 and 6am were transferred to the day. And, for this particular consultation, there is concern that detailed cost-benefit analyses do not appear to be carried out for different scenarios at each airport – for example, an eight hour night flight ban; seven hour night flight ban. Before any decision is taken at Heathrow there ought to be a clear cost-benefit analysis of a seven hour ban and eight hour ban.

Feel free to use anything in this briefing but always remember you don't need to be an expert to respond. Simply explaining how you feel in your own words will be sufficient.

HACAN gives a voice to residents under the Heathrow flight paths. We can be contacted at info@hacan.org.uk; tel 020 8876 0455, website: www.hacan.org.uk

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