

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. The details of that regime will be outlined in the consultation, expected late January/early February, on the National Policy Statement on Airports (NPS) – essentially a consultation on the third runway. 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 quieter, 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.

HACAN's comments

- We are very disappointed that there is not a ban on flights proposed between 11pm and 6am from October 2017.
- We are, though, encouraged that the number of planes allowed between 11pm and 6am has not been increased.
- And, though we would have liked to have seen an immediate ban, we do see the logic in not making any changes in advance of the consultation on a third runway. In that consultation we will strongly make the case for a ban on flights between 11pm and 6am (whether or not a third runway is built). Our case will be based on the fact that night flights can impact on people's quality of life and on their health and that those adverse impacts should not be outweighed by whatever economic benefits night flights may bring.
- We welcome the introduction of the new category QC/0.125 as it ensures that none of the aircraft which will potentially use Heathrow at night will be exempt from the movements limit.
- We note that the noise contours drawn up still do not reflect all the areas disturbed by night flights even though there has been a welcome move away by the DfT from using the much-criticised Leq contour.

The Consultation Questions

(You don't need to have a view on them all)

Q1a. How strongly do you agree or disagree with our proposed environmental objective for the next regime (We propose an environmental objective to encourage the use of quieter aircraft to limit or reduce the number of people significantly affected by aircraft noise at night, while maintaining the existing benefits of night flights)?

Q1b. Do you have any additional comments on our proposed environmental objective for the next regime?

Q2a. How strongly do you agree or disagree with our proposal for the length of the next regime?

Q2b. Do you have any additional comments on our proposal for the length of the regime?

Q3a. How strongly do you agree or disagree with our proposal to introduce a new QC/0.125 category for aircraft between 81 and 83.9 EPNdB?

Q3b. How strongly do you agree or disagree with our proposal for all aircraft quieter than this to remain QC/0 but count towards the airports movement limit?

Q3c. Do you have any additional comments on proposals for the Quota Count System? **Q4a.** How strongly do you agree or disagree with the proposal for movement limits to remain unchanged at Heathrow?

Q4b – Q9b relate to Gatwick and Stansted.

Q10. Do you have any further views on our proposals, or their potential impact on the Government's ability to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty?

Note: There is no need to respond to the questions. If you feel it easier, simply email DfT with your thoughts and comments.