

Aviation Consultation

Response from HACAN

HACAN represents residents under the Heathrow flight paths. In our response we have followed the questions in the consultation document in each chapter.

Chapter 2: The Benefits of Aviation

Do you agree with our analysis of the meaning and value of connectivity set out in this chapter?

We are pleased there a clear statement in the document to the effect that the UK is at present very well connected with the rest of the world. Along with WWF and RSPB, HACAN has commissioned research covering this area which we will be submitting that research to the Davies Commission.

Do you support extending the fifth freedom to Gatwick, Stansted and Luton?

We have no comment on this.

Do you agree that the Government should offer bilateral partners unilateral open access to UK airports outside the South-East on a case-by-case basis?

We do not have a view on this.

Do you have any comment on the approach and evidence set out in Chapter 2?

The consultation has attempted an honest appraisal of the contribution of aviation to the economy. And we acknowledge that aviation is important to the economy. However, there are two areas which need further work:

- There needs to be an estimate of the cost to the economy of two things: one, **the tax-breaks the aviation industry enjoys** in terms of tax-free fuel and its exemptions from VAT; and, two, **the economic costs of the noise, air pollution and climate change gases aviation produces.**
- The figures around **the tourism deficit.** We applaud the fact that for the first time, to our knowledge, the possibility of a tourism deficit is acknowledged. However further work is required; in particular, we are sceptical about the “huge” contribution which ABTA claims travellers flying abroad make to the economy through their spending in this country associated with the trip. The UK Tourism Satellite Account, used in compiling the consultation document, is cautious about this spending: “One area where data remains poor is in assessing spend by UK residents travelling abroad before they leave the country.....”. This needs further work.

We are pleased the Department has started a piece of work to identify options to dealing with **slots**. The current way slots operate at Heathrow is a key barrier to both the airport being run more effectively and in the UK getting the most out of it economically. Slot reform could allow for a better Heathrow. We are looking forward to commenting on the progress report.

In general, we support attempts to **liberalise the market**. Some of the current bilateral agreements may be limiting access to emerging markets – for example the current agreement with mainland China limits the number of flights which can operate between the UK and China. This is not in the interest of the economy.

Chapter 3: Climate Change

Do you have any further ideas on how the Government could incentivize the aviation and aerospace sectors to improve the performance of aircraft with the aim of reducing emissions?

We do not have a view on this.

Do you have any other comments on the approach and evidence set out on Chapter 3?

We do not think that a convincing case has been made that **climate change emissions** can be reduced by simply relying on cleaner technology, the EU Emissions Trading System and the Single European Sky Agreement. The Government needs to use every tool at its disposal. It needs to include aviation in its carbon budget and it needs to endorse the target of cutting aviation emissions to at least their 2005 levels by 2050.

We welcome the recognition of the potential of **tele-conferencing** and of **rail** as alternatives to air travel. Investment in rail (which is taking place) and a policy to reduce rail fares (which does not exist) are both needed if rail is to fulfill its potential as an alternative to short-haul flights. It would also be important to take steps – through an annual above-inflation rise of Air Passenger Duty – to deal with the artificial demand that currently exists for air travel, created by its tax-free fuel and its zero-rating for VAT. We would also recommend that the Government provides tax breaks on tele-conferencing equipment and its installation to boost its use and help reduce the reliance on aviation.

We are pleased that the Government is showing caution over **biofuels**: “once we have a better understanding of these issues we will be in a better position to decide.....the extent to which biofuels offer a way forward.”

Chapter 4: Noise and Local Environmental Impacts

Do you agree that the Government should continue to designate the three largest London airports for noise management purposes?

We do agree.

However, we think the Government should give more direction to non-designated airports. The consultation document is suggesting that many of the proposals only apply to the three designated airports (Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick) or, in some cases, just to the larger airports. At many of the non-designated and smaller airports it is suggesting leaving noise management to planning conditions imposed by the local authority, implementation of the noise action plans and “voluntary arrangements” through the influence of the consultative committees.

There is no guarantee that this approach will work. Even with the stronger, more representative airport consultative committees that the Government envisages, there can be no

guarantee that airport operators will cooperate with local communities without government direction and/or the involvement of an outside body such as the Civil Aviation Authority. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the local authorities, the planning authority, often own or part-own the airport.

At Heathrow HACAN has established a good working relationship with BAA but this would not have been possible at many other airports. At London City Airport, for example, the airport is unresponsive and the consultative committee in urgent need of reform. That situation is mirrored at many airports across the country.

There is little logic to the current situation. As the table below shows, the number of people affected by noise at many of the non-designated airports is larger than the numbers affected at two of the designated airports, Stansted and Gatwick.

Numbers of people living with the 55 Lden contour

Airport	No of people	% of people affected across Europe
Heathrow	725,500	28.5%
Manchester	94,000	3.7%
Glasgow	63,600	2.5%
Birmingham	47,900	1.9%
Aberdeen	16,300	0.6%
Edinburgh	15,000	0.5%
London City	12,200	0.5%
Southampton	12,100	0.5%
Gatwick	11,900	0.5%
East Midlands	10,500	0.4%
Stansted	9,400	0.4%
Luton	8,600	0.3%
Leeds Bradford	8,400	0.3%
Newcastle	5,900	0.2%
Liverpool	5,700	0.2%
Totals	1,044,300	41.0%

Source: European Commission, CAA. Figures based on the populations

The 55 Lden measurement used is a reasonably good measurement of noise annoyance but it can give a distorted picture of airports which have few or no night flights. Daytime-only readings would see London City Airport and Belfast City Airport (George Best Airport) move up the table.

If the Government does not give greater direction to all the airports, possibly through the involvement of a body like the Civil Aviation Authority, it risks missing a real opportunity to bring all communities in from the cold.

Do you agree with the Government’s overall objective on aviation noise?

We support the overall objective “to limit and, where possible, reduce the number of people in the UK significantly affected by aircraft noise” but note the need for flexibility in order that noise abatement measures at a particular airport can be best designed to respond to the concerns of local residents.

We welcome the intention to establish “a new policy framework” for aircraft noise. Many of the ideas put forward in the chapter could radically alter aviation noise policy in the UK. It

asks questions that haven't been asked for decades. It opens doors which previous governments kept firmly shut. If implemented effectively, the proposals could bring communities in from the cold.

Do you agree that the Government should retain as the 57 dB LAeq, 16h contour average level of daytime aircraft noise marking the approximate onset of significant community annoyance?

Do you think that the Government should map noise exposure around the noise designated airports to a lower level than 57 dB(A)? If so, which level would be appropriate?

We are taking these questions together.

We welcome the fact that both these questions are being seriously considered. The measurement of noise sounds, and is, technical but has significant political implications. If levels of noise annoyance are underestimated – and many experts allege they have been – it will distort policy decisions about future growth.

The Government should not retain the 57 dB LAeq, 16h contour. It does not tally with reality. For example, at Heathrow, places like Fulham or Putney, both plagued by aircraft noise, fall outside this 57 decibel contour. Nor is it consistent with the levels recommended by the World Health Authority, or the method of measurement favoured by the European Union.

The EU required member states to use 55 Lden to measure noise annoyance when drawing up their noise action plans in 2009. The difference in the numbers affected at Heathrow compared with the 57 Leq method is enormous: over 725,000 people compared with just over 250,000.

The consultation acknowledges the criticisms of the 57 Leq method and is willing to hear views on alternative methods. However, somewhat illogically, it then says “as there is no conclusive evidence on which to base a new level, for the present time we are minded to retain the 57 dB LAeq,16h contour as the average level of daytime aircraft noise marking the approximate onset of significant community annoyance.”

It should either go for 55 Lden or 54 Leq. While HACAN can see value in 55 Lden, particularly as it would allow easy comparison with other European countries and is required to be used when the noise action plans are revised, we do understand that, if an airport bans night flights, 54 Leq may be a better measurement.

There is no logic in retaining 57 dB LAeq,16h. Nor should that be regarded as the easy option, as, if it is retained, official noise measurements will just not be accepted as accurate by local communities, many local authorities and a lot of noise experts. Retaining it will just lead to conflict which could be avoided by adopting a more realistic value.

But, if noise averaging is to be retained in some form or another, it is important to recognise that residents mostly have very different requirements which are not met by LAeq contours. There need to be complementary contours put in place such as **noise event histograms**.

The Government should produce **annual noise maps** – using either 55 Lden or 54 Leq – for the designated airports. But we also believe non-designated airports should also be required

to produce such maps. It both would make things transparent for the local community and form a sound basis for policy-making. Consolidated maps should be required for airports where residents are impacted by two airports – such as Heathrow and London City.

Do you agree with the proposed principles to which the Government would have regard when setting a noise envelope at any new national hub or any other airport development which is a nationally significant infrastructure project?

HACAN, in its response to the Scoping Document, expressed real reservations that noise envelopes risked becoming a device which allowed more growth without bringing any real benefits to residents. We welcome the fact that the Department has tried to address these fears. This consultation document argues that a noise envelope could take different forms. It could, for example, simply be a cap on the number of aircraft allowed to use the airport. This would be warmly welcomed by most residents. However, the consultation says: “There was a stark difference in views on whether an envelope should include a cap on movement numbers”. Faced with this the Government says it is “therefore interested in exploring other more sophisticated ways of articulating noise envelopes.” It floats the idea of limiting the number of people exposed to noise or the size of the area. The correct envelope could bring benefits to both the industry and local communities but, without a cap on flight numbers being a part of any envelop, local communities are likely to remain nervous about the concept.

Do you agree that noise should be given particular weight when balanced against other environmental factors affecting communities living near airports?

We are delighted that the Government has said quite clearly that, in the vicinity of airports, noise must be given priority: “the Government believes that at the local level, individual airports working with the appropriate air traffic service providers, should give particular weight to the management and mitigation of noise in the immediate vicinity of airports. Any negative impacts that this might have on CO₂ emissions should be tackled as part of the UK’s overall strategy to reduce aviation emissions, such as the EU ETS. This principle will be particularly significant when considering changes to procedures such as noise preferential routes or the introduction of new procedures such as continuous climb departures.”

We would add that measures to cut **air pollution** in the immediate vicinity of any airport are essential, particularly if, as at Heathrow, there is the very real possibility of them exceeding the EU legal limits.

What factors should the Government consider when deciding how to balance the benefits of respite with other environmental benefits?

There may be opportunities to provide more respite through the plans, already underway, to reorganize and make more effective use of airspace. New technology is being introduced which will enable air traffic controllers to direct planes much more precisely when they land at or take off from airports.

Given this ability to guide planes more precisely, the Government needs to decide whether to recommend concentrating all the planes over particular communities, thus running the risk of creating noise ghettos, or dispersing them more widely. We welcome the fact that the consultation seems to leave the way open for some local flexibility. In our view that is sensible: what might be appropriate for one airport might not work at another.

We are particularly pleased that the Government has recognized the need, where at all possible, for some **respite** from the noise for local communities: “For those who are already affected by noise, and especially where frequency of movements has increased over time, the Government believes that it is important to give respite wherever feasible.” Those words describe exactly the situation experienced by hundreds of thousands of Londoners who suddenly found themselves with a noise problem in the mid-1990s when, without consultation or compensation, the point at which aircraft were expected to join their final approach path to Heathrow was extended 2-3 miles east. (It also affects residents across parts of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, when the east wind is blowing). The areas affected have never recovered. See our video: http://youtu.be/rXf8o_khz8s and our short publication: <http://www.hacan.org.uk/resources/briefings/hacan.briefing.no.longer.wl.problem.pdf>. We would like, though, the Government to go further than “it is important to give respite” and commit to working actively to introducing periods of respite.

Do you agree with the Government’s proposals in paragraph 4.68 on noise limits, monitoring and penalties?

We broadly agree with these proposals. The review of departure limits should look at the noise across the whole route, not just be confined to particular, single points. Penalties for the breach of limits need to be higher but they should not replace the sort of collaborative approach developed at Heathrow where BAA works with the airlines and other parties to progressively ensure adherence to best practice.

In what circumstances would it be appropriate for the Government to make an order requiring designated airports to maintain a penalty scheme?

We do not have comments on this.

In what circumstances would it be appropriate for the Government to make an order requiring designated airports to maintain and operate noise monitors and produce noise measurement reports?

Noise monitors, together with the publication of regular noise measurements, are essential both for transparency and as a basis for sound policy making. They should include at least the area within the 55 Len or 54 Leq contour but there should be some monitors outside that area as noise annoyance can and does extend beyond those boundaries.

We would support the idea of **an independent noise regulator** to oversee a lot of this work. HACAN feels the CAA could fulfil this role but, since some NGOs and local community groups do not regard it as truly independent of the aviation industry, consideration should also be given to alternative models of providing independent oversight. HACAN is in discussion with BAA, who have commissioned a study, about this.

Non-designated airports should also be required to carry out similar monitoring, supervised by an independent regulator.

How could differential landing fees be better utilized to improve the noise environment around airports, particularly at night?

We don’t have a strong view on this but would support the proposal to ask the CAA to investigate it further.

Do you think airport compensation schemes are reasonable and proportionate?

No, some sort of scheme should be available to everybody living within the 55 Lden or 54 Leq contour. Free sound proofing options need to be extended to the much wider population under flight paths.

Do you agree with the approach to the management of noise from general aviation and helicopters, in particular to the use of the section 5 power?

We welcome the recognition that **general aviation** aircraft can cause real problems. While local resolution is obviously preferable, it is only possible if the aerodrome/airfield is willing to act reasonably. If they are not, the local community is often powerless to do anything. We, therefore, believe that section 5 is an important weapon for the Government (acting through the CAA) to have in reserve should the aerodrome/airfield be uncooperative. We would support the introduction of the necessary secondary legislation to give the CAA the full powers it requires to carry out these duties.

Helicopters can be a real problem, particularly in London and the South East. We welcome the recognition of this in the consultation and the commitment to consider how to address noise from helicopters in the review of the 2002 guidance.

What other measures might be considered that would improve the management of noise from these sources?

The Government should look at the possibility of charging helicopters per mile travelled (with emergency helicopters being exempt) to reduce the number of helicopters in the sky.

Do you have any further ideas on how the Government could incentivize the aviation and aerospace sector to deliver quieter planes?

We have no comment on this

Do you believe that the regime for the regulation of other environmental impacts at airports is effective?

Broadly we believe the right regulations are in place.

Do you think that noise regulation should be integrated into a broader regulatory framework which tackles the local environmental impacts from airports?

Yes, the environmental impact should include noise as well as environmental side.

Chapter 5: Working Together

Do you think Airport Consultative Committees should play a stronger role, and, if so, how could this be achieved?

Airport Consultative Committees (ACCs), as currently constituted, could not fulfil the wider role that the Government has in mind for them. We welcome, therefore, the intention to review, update and consult on the 2003 guidance to ACCs.

Our suggested blueprint would be:

- The chair and vice chair (or, preferably co-chairs so no one person can become too dominant) be appointed by a small, independent, national panel. Members of the national panel would be appointed by the Secretary of State, ideally after consultation with the opposition parties, for a fixed term of no more than five years and would include a representative from government, business, the aviation industry, local authorities, the environmental sector, a community representative and, for London and the South-East, a representative of the Mayor's office or the London Assembly. It would be chaired by a senior member of the CAA.
- The appointment of the co-chairs would be for a fixed term of no more than 5 years.
- Any remuneration of the co-chairs, as well as payment to the secretariat, should be funded by government or the CAA, not by the airport.
- The composition of the ACC might vary a little according to local circumstances but should include representatives from the airport, local residents' organizations, local authorities, local businesses and local environmental organizations.
 - our preference would be for a small ACC which would call on outside help as required
 - members of the ACC should represent organizations; they should not be unaccountable individuals
 - there is a significant problem to be resolved re: the position of local authorities which own or part-own an airport; they have a real potential conflict of interest.
- We are not certain that ACCs should be asked to both deal with the impact of the airport on the surrounding area and have a role in representing passengers at the airport. They are different roles and, to be required to do both, would probably make the ACC unwieldy and unfocussed. We recognise the Government's intention to set up the CAA's new Consumer Panel but, on balance, we think this should remain separate from the work of the ACC. The only possible way of incorporating this work into that of the ACC would be through a sub-committee.
- The Secretariat of the ACC should not be housed at the airport or in airport premises.
- The meetings of the ACC should not be held at the airport. Ideally, the various groups represented on the ACC should take turns in hosting them.
- At least a third of the full meetings of the ACC should be held on a Saturday to make it easier for the public to attend. All ACC meetings should be advertised in the local press 2 weeks in advance telling the public that they can attend all meetings. Each venue should make provision for seating members of the public, so venues should be chosen carefully. Also, there should be a section at the end of each agenda where questions are taken from those members of the public who turned up.
- Neither of the co-chairs nor any member of the Secretariat should have a direct or indirect financial interest in the operation of the airport.

Is there a case for changing the list of airports currently designated to provide consultative committees?

We may have misunderstood this question but we feel strongly that Government guidance on ACC's should apply to all airports.

Do you agree that the Civil Aviation Authority should have a role in providing independent oversight of airport's noise management?

We would support this.

Do you agree with the Government's overall objective on working together?

We do.

Is the high-level guidance provided in Annex E sufficient to allow airports to develop local solutions with local partners?

We have no view on this.

Do you agree that master plans should incorporate airport surface access strategies?

We think master plans, a legacy of the failed 2003 Air Transport White Paper, are unnecessary. They are little more than the airport's aspirations but they can cause confusion in the planning process and at public inquiries.

Do you agree that, where appropriate, the periods covered by master plans and noise action plans should be aligned?

See answer to previous question

John Stewart
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