



Night Flights

How is "night" defined?

For the purpose of night flights, there are two "night" periods, as defined by the Government! Although "night" is officially from 11.00pm until 7am, there are only restrictions on the number of flights permitted during the "night quota" period, 11.30pm until 6am.

How many flights are allowed at night?

On a typical night, no more than 16 flights are allowed between 11.30pm and 6am. Some nights there are a few more, but, over a year, it must average out as no more than 16 each night. Between 6am and 7am, there are no restrictions. In fact, this is one of the busiest hours of the day - the only hour when planes are permitted to land on both runways. Take-offs also start during this hour.

Do flight paths alternate?

Yes, in theory. There is a different system of runway alternation at night - between 11.30pm and 6am. One week planes land on the northern runway from the west; the second week on the northern runway from the east; the third week on the southern runway from the west; and the fourth week on the southern runway from the east. This is only altered if the strength of the wind makes it impossible to land with the wind or in emergencies. There are no take-offs scheduled between 11.30pm and 6am, though they do take place from time to time.

What happened as a result of the European Court Case?

Things have stayed the same. HACAN ClearSkies took the Government to the European Court of Human rights arguing that night flights breached Article 8 of the Human Rights Convention that entitled people to the peaceful enjoyment of their own homes. The UK Government appealed. The Appeal Court found in favour of the Government.

What happens now?

Every few years the Government enters into an agreement with the airlines into the number of flights that will be permitted to use Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick airports at night. The current agreement runs until Autumn 2022.