

Press Release

10/10/12 for immediate use

NEW WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION GUIDELINES INDICATE AIRCRAFT NOISE CAUSE HEALTH PROBLEMS OVER 20 MILES FROM HEATHROW

Campaign group HACAN has said that the new noise guidelines from the World Health Organisation, published today, send a strong message to Heathrow as it develops its new flight paths that aircraft noise problems are not confined to areas close to the airport. The guidelines indicate that aircraft noise can affect the health of people living well over 20 miles from Heathrow.

HACAN chair John Stewart said, “The clear message to Heathrow is that it needs to look after its distant neighbours as well as its near neighbours when planning its new flight paths. The most effective way to do that is to ensure that residents living 20 miles and more from the airport are guaranteed predictable breaks from the noise each day.

Stewart, “The findings confirm everything residents have been telling us over many years. Noise from Heathrow is not just a problem local to the airport.”

The World Health Organisation has found that when average noise is 45 decibels it can have health effects. Previous WHO guidelines argued that people could start to become annoyed by noise when it averaged out at 50 decibels over the day. In geographical terms that covered areas about 16 miles from the airport, places like Peckham in South East London.

A 45 decibel contour would to extend at least 20 miles from the airport, to places like Greenwich in the east and Reading in the west. But it would also include places such as Leytonstone in North East which experience noise from both Heathrow and London City Airport.

The World Health Organisation guidelines applies to all countries within Europe, not just those in the European Union but are simply guidelines. Their main purpose is to outline the health impacts of noise on the basis of the available evidence. The WHO does not expect the levels to be adhered to overnight as that would entail the closure of most airports and many roads.

The key recommendations are:

Recommended Limits

Road	53Lden	45Lnight
Rail	54Lden	44Lnight
Aircraft	45Len	40Lnight
Wind Turbines	45Lden	no recommendation*

The recommended levels for air and wind are lower because the evidence shows that people become more annoyed by them at lower levels than road and rail.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

1. The full report:

http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/383921/noise-guidelines-eng.pdf?ua=1

2. Lden averages the noise out over an 8 hour day, a 4 hour evening and an 8 hour night, with 5 and 10 decibels added to the evening and night figures respectively to account for generally lower background levels at those times. **Lnight** averages the noise just during the night period

* The WHO felt that there was insufficient evidence to make a recommendation

For further information:

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