

**SOUTH EAST ENGLAND REGIONAL ASSEMBLY
REGIONAL PLANNING COMMITTEE**

Date: 27 July 2005

Subject: **Night Flying Restrictions At Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted
Airports – Stage 2 Consultation**

Report of: Director of Planning and Transport

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee, in responding to the consultation:

1. Support proposals to:
 - a. Continue to exclude landings for delayed aircraft and aircraft subject to disruption from the quota of night time movements;
 - b. Reduce the noise quota and the number of night time movements at Gatwick Airport;
 - c. Reduce the noise quota at Heathrow Airport.
 2. Object to proposals to:
 - a. Extend the night quota period from 2330-0600 to 2300-0700;
 - b. Increase the flexibility in the quota of night time movements between seasons;
 - c. Increase the number of night time movements at Heathrow Airport.
 3. Advocates an early review of night time noise quota at Heathrow Airport with a view to further reducing the quota in light of improvements in aircraft design.
 4. Expresses concern at the Regional Assembly's omission from the list of consultees.
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1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the content and proposals of the Government consultation paper and to seek approval for a proposed response.

2. Background: Night Flying Restrictions Regime 1999 to 2006

- 2.1 As previously reported the present night flying restrictions regime for Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports was originally intended to apply up to 31 October 2004. The Stage 1 consultation proposed extending that regime by one year, to October 2005. This Stage 2 consultation document proposes a further year's extension to the current arrangements to October 2006, whereafter the detailed proposals set out in the consultation would commence.

- 2.2 The present restrictions regime applies at two levels. Firstly, there is a 'Night Period' (NP) restriction enforced from 2300 to 0700 daily at all three airports. The effects of the 'Night Period' restrictions are that the noisiest types of aircraft may not be scheduled to land or take off (other than in the most exceptional circumstances).
- 2.3 There is also a second, greater level of restriction, known as a 'Night Quota Period' (NQP), which is enforced from 2330 to 0600 daily. The noisiest types of aircraft are effectively banned from taking off or landing during this period (except in the most urgent and exceptional circumstances), while movements by all other types of aircraft, except the very quietest, are severely restricted by both a limit on movements and a noise quota.
- 2.4 It should however be noted that the limits on air transport movements, and noise quotas which are enforced during the NQP are set on a seasonal (rather than a weekly, nightly or other) basis.

3. Conclusions of the Stage 1 Consultation and Stage 2 Consultation Proposals

- 3.1 A Stage 1 Consultation Paper was issued in 2004 by the Government, which sought views on the broad structure of the regime governing the next set of Night Flying Restrictions (NFR) from Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted Airports. The Committee considered the content of the consultation paper in September 2004.
- 3.2 The Committee resolved to advise the Secretary of State for Transport, that in the light of the Government's own policies on sustainable development and climate change, and the published Integrated Regional Framework for the Region, it was essential that the night flying restrictions at Heathrow and Gatwick were maintained at least at current levels, with continuation of the use of the NQP and QC system. The Committee also resolved that the limit on the number of flights allowed needed to be retained, and more accurate noise measurements for the period 04.30 – 07.00 introduced. The Government has itself concluded in the Stage 2 consultation document that it is "probably appropriate" to retain the current NQP as it stands.
- 3.3 The Stage 2 consultation document sets out environmental and noise abatement objectives, partially based on responses to the Stage 1 consultation.
- 3.4 The environmental objectives are:
- The promotion of the development of airport capacity in harmony with the environment;
 - Facilitating any specific noise abatement objectives at that airport;
 - Achieving maximum environmental benefit in the most cost-effective manner;

- Limiting or reducing the number of people significantly affected by aircraft noise.

Specifically at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports, these translate to:

- To progressively encourage the use of quieter aircraft by day and by night;
- To avoid allowing the overall noise from aircraft during the Night Quota Period to increase above that permitted in 2002-03;
- To meet noise-abatement objectives as adopted from time to time;

3.5 The night noise abatement objectives are:

- To minimise sleep disturbance resulting from the overflight of the noisiest types of aircraft;
- To mitigate the effects of noise (in particular, sleep disturbance effects)

4 Key Issues and Recommended Responses to Stage 2 Consultation

4.1 Extension of Night Quota Period.

4.1.1 The Assembly's agreed position is that the present NQP (and hence also Night Period) restrictions are at least maintained at current levels. Extending the NQP to 23.00–07.00 (from the current 23.30-6.00) would adversely affect inter-continental flights scheduled to arrive pre-0700. Such flights are of importance to the regional and national economy and an extension of the NQP is likely to have an adverse economic impact. It is therefore recommended that the Assembly object to the extension of the NQP.

4.2 Landing Rules for Delayed Aircraft/Aircraft subject to Disruption

4.2.1 The present regime allows such landings to take place and not be regarded as part of the quota of movements. As there can be safety implications for such movements, it is recommended that the Assembly support the proposal that such aircraft movements should continue to be excluded from the quota.

4.3 Proposed Movements and Quota Controls, and Overrun and Carryover Arrangements

4.3.1 The consultation document proposes an increase in the proportion of the quota for night flights that can be carried over between seasons from the current 5% to a proposed 10%. This increase is presented as no more than permitting greater flexibility in the "carryover" of movements covered by the quota between seasons. However such an arrangement is likely to have an adverse impact on the wellbeing and quality of life of surrounding communities by potentially increasing the concentration of flights at certain times of the year. It could be argued that allowing the increase in the quota is consistent with maximising the use of existing runway capacity. However there is no proof that the potential economic benefit arising from the increase in the quota outweighs

- the adverse impact on the health of local residents, in particular the additional sleep disturbance that would result.
- 4.3.2 It is clear that the proposal is inconsistent with the environmental and noise abatement objectives set out within the consultation document. It is therefore recommended that the Assembly object to this proposal.
- 4.4 Proposed Noise Quota and Movement Limits at Gatwick and Heathrow Airports
- 4.4.1 The consultation document proposes a substantial reduction in the noise quota for Gatwick Airport for both the summer (a reduction of 78%) and winter (a reduction of 35%) seasons by 2011-12. The document also proposes a reduction in night time movements at Gatwick Airport for both the summer (a reduction of 11%) and winter (a reduction of 43%) seasons by 2011-12. It is recommended that the Assembly support these proposals for Gatwick Airport. The changes in noise quotas will incentivise aircraft operators to use quieter aircraft, whilst the reduction in night time movements is likely to impact most on less economically significant aircraft movements.
- 4.4.2 The consultation document proposes a slight reduction in the noise quota for Heathrow Airport for both the summer (a reduction of 1.5%) and winter (a reduction of 1.5%) season by 2011-12. It is recommended that the Assembly support these proposals. In so doing it is recommended that the Assembly advocate an early review of night time noise quotas in response to continued improvements in aircraft design that reduce noise emissions.
- 4.4.3 The consultation document proposes an increase in night time movements at Heathrow Airport for both the summer (an increase of 10%) and winter (an increase of 10%) seasons by 2011-12. The Assembly has previously rejected any proposal to increase the number of night time movements. No new evidence presented in the consultation document that suggests the Assembly review this position. Indeed the proposal to increase night time movements is inconsistent with the environmental objectives set out in the consultation document. Accordingly it is recommended that the Assembly object to this proposal.
- 4.5 It is recommended that the Committee draw the Secretary of State's attention to Assembly's omission from the list of consultees, despite other neighbouring regional planning bodies being so included.

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12 July 2005

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