

## Secretary's report to EANAG AGM 17 June 2014

In August we responded to the Davies commission on aircraft noise. We said that the government's noise threshold of 57dbLeq was far too high, as residents were disturbed by noise at much lower levels, so that 55dbLden would be a realistic threshold. Much of Ealing is within that threshold, none within the higher one. We pointed out we get take-off noise for at least 17.5 hours on 30% of days in a year, without the possibility of respite. We said that this involves sleep disturbance as well as daytime annoyance, and that easterly flying may well increase because of melting icecaps with global warming, and that the government should not end the westerly preference for Heathrow operation, and that if the government would not accept the ANASE findings it should carry out a new survey of the effects of aircraft noise on residents. We also said we do not believe there is any need for expansion of airport capacity in the UK.

In September we commented to the Commission on the Heathrow proposals for a third runway at either the North-west or south-west of the airport, saying it was unnecessary, that if more slots were needed for long-haul flights, these could be provided by reducing the number of short-haul flights to places easily reachable by train. HACC had recently been informed that this had been done to provide a slot for a flight to Guang-Zhou by cutting out an ex-bmi flight. We said that the noise burden would increase for residents, and that the roads in west London had no spare capacity. We repeated our arguments on the use of 55dbLden and on the lack of respite on take-off routes.

In October we were made aware of a study which showed an increased number of heart attacks around major airports. We expressed to the Commission our disappointment at its decision that a new runway in the south-east was necessary. We referred the Commission to ANASE and other studies around European airports showing that many more people were seriously disturbed by aircraft noise than previously accepted, and said that Heathrow's claim that fewer people would be affected and that new planes were quieter was hypocritical.

In December we responded to the DfT stage 1 consultation on the next night flights regime, saying that attention should be given to reducing, then eliminating, delayed take-offs after 23.30, as well as the arrivals before 6am, and that airlines which could not get their flights away before 23.30 should put their passengers in hotels. We pointed out that Frankfurt, among other airports now has a total ban on night flights.

In January we responded to the stage 2 consultation on night flights, saying the government should take account of the recent studies showing sleep disturbance leads to increased risk of cardiovascular disease and not discount these claiming

lack of evidence, that the current quotas for night flights should be reduced to at most the actual numbers for the last two years, and eventually night flying should cease.

We are threatened with loss of the westerly preference in Heathrow operation. Heathrow has asked the DfT to abolish the preference that allows westerly operation to continue when there is an east wind of less than ten knots. If this happened it would be very serious for Ealing as it would mean that there would be flying over us, and other parts of west London for something like 50% of the time instead of the current 25-30%, which we all find quite bad enough. EANAG has written to the Secretary of State via Ealing MPs and just got a standard reply, twice, about Heathrow expansion, not westerly preference at all. Please all write to your MP and ask for an assurance from the Secretary of State.

Much of the information we have about the current state of Heathrow and its plans for the future, which goes into our various submissions to the DfT and Davies, as well as the data circulated to members on night flights and east-west operational split comes from our membership of and attendance at HACC. Last year Heathrow appointed consultants to consider the effectiveness of HACC, and when the consultants reported in March, they recommended reducing the size of the committee, mainly by shedding EANAG and two of the 3 members from each LA closest to Heathrow :Hillingdon Hounslow Richmond and Spelthorne. Heathrow says HACAN can represent us. We know from experience that this is not true: HACAN is concerned with the problems of residents under the landing tracks to the east of the airport, while ours are with the quite different take-off paths. Our work would be much more difficult, and less effective, if this happened. Please write to HACC to support us. [carole\\_havercroft@baa.com](mailto:carole_havercroft@baa.com) and even to your MP.

The CAA has recently published a paper on consultation between the aviation industry and local communities, saying that communities should have more say on airport operations, so removing us from HACC would go against that. CAA CAP 1165 *Managing Aviation Noise* May 2014.

Earlier this year Heathrow, without prior notice, abolished the Noise and Track-Keeping Working Group, which was attended by LA technical officers and which discussed in detail environmental matters around the airport, including problems caused by delayed flights, deviation from normal paths etc. HACC was able to appoint people to NTK. They have replaced it by a Heathrow Noise Forum, proposed in their update to the Noise Action Plan without any suggestion that this would replace NTK. Membership of the Noise Forum is determined by Heathrow.

Heathrow is also discussing with the government separation of planes in the air by time rather than by the distance 2.5 nautical miles used at present. The effect of this is unknown, but Heathrow is likely to have proposed it to get more planes in the air rather than to benefit people on the ground.

They are also still keen on the idea of a noise envelope, using a theoretical maximum noise permitted rather than a quota or limit on individual flight noise. Davies mentions this in the first report. It would be permissive, like the quota for night flights, and in practice would make the situation worse.

Heathrow has set up a group called Back Heathrow and is funding it. It has only two directors, one of them, Nathan Fletcher, is Heathrow 's head of communications planning, the other, Robert Gray, is a lobbyist for the Aviation Foundation. Ealing residents may well have had its leaflet claiming Heathrow would close if not allowed to build a third runway. Using this the group persuaded many people to complete its survey to say they back Heathrow expansion.

Our membership of LAANC is very helpful. Attending 8 meetings a year, in Staines, is well worth it, as it is well attended by LA technical officers sharing their thoughts on what Heathrow is doing and is likely to do.

On 6<sup>th</sup> June we were invited to meet the president and officials of ACNUSA, the French government body with some power to influence the operation of airports in the country. They wanted to know about our work and our problems, and as we were in the end represented by Phil and me, the conversation was able to be in French, which speeded up the amount we were able to get through in an hour.

We have been unable to keep our website up to date this year because no-one on the committee has the expertise to do it, but we have now been fortunate enough to welcome Mr William John who is taking it on for the time being for a small honorarium. He is very welcome.

Our auditor for many years has moved away. We are very grateful to him for his help and wish him well for the future. Luckily the manager of VLS, the local charity I do voluntary work for, has take this on, and we are glad to welcome her help.

We do try to get into public consciousness. Two RAs at least are affiliated and get our emails, and we do write to the Gazette, who occasionally publish our letters. They did publish one last November, about Back Heathrow, but didn't publish the one we wrote this spring about the westerly preference.

The committee seems to have been very busy this year, with the demands made in particular by the Davies commission and Heathrow's taking advantage of it to push their policies. The priority now seems to be stopping Heathrow expansion, controlling night flights, and staying on HACCC. All offers of help will be gratefully received. The next committee meeting is Wednesday 2 July 7pm at 35 Southdown Avenue. All members are welcome.

Margaret Majumdar