

Committee: Environment
Date: 14 September 2004
Agenda Item No: 10
Title: Night Flying Restrictions at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted
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Summary

- 1 This report invites the Committee to comment on the issues subject of this Stage 1 consultation and to authorise officers to respond by 29 October in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Committee.

Background

- 2 The Department for Transport has initiated a Stage 1 of Consultation on restrictions to apply after October 2005. This first stage of consultation includes a statement of the Government's broad aims and invites suggestions for both environmental and noise abatement objectives. It also includes detailed proposals relating to the noise classification of aircraft. The closing date for responses is the 29th October 2004. The full text of the Consultation Paper can be viewed on the DfT's website.
- 3 The Stansted Airport Advisory Panel has held over discussions on this issue until its next meeting on 14 October, inter alia to allow points raised at the Local Government Association Strategic Aviation Special Interest Group to be taken into account.
- 4 The Council's current policy is that there should be no night flights at Stansted.

Aims and Objectives of the Restrictions

- 5 The Government intends to formulate one or more environmental objectives for each airport and considers that they should take account of a number of broad aims including 'The Future of Aviation', the WHO 'Guidelines for Community Noise' and to strike a fair balance between the protection of local communities and the provision of air services at night which have economic benefits. The objectives of the current restrictions at Stansted also enable competitive factors and research, for example into health effects and impact of sleep patterns, to be taken into account. They are intended to encourage

use of quieter aircraft at night, and provide for the planned development of Stansted.

- 6 The paper includes a range of base case data for the period 2002-2003 and suggests that objectives could be set with reference to these baselines, which include LDEN contours, Lnight contours and 90dBA SEL footprints, and gives details of the areas, populations and households under the individual contour bands within each type of contour.

Classification of Aircraft

- 7 The government has accepted that ICAO noise certification data must be used in imposing operational restrictions on aircraft. It suggests including lighter aircraft within the restrictions, introducing a new QC/0.25 band and prohibiting QC/4 aircraft from operating in the night period. The paper questions the basis for a reduction of 9EPNdB for an aircraft when arriving to determine its QC banding but provides a summary of an ERCD report that concludes that the adjustment is still valid.

Other Preliminary Considerations

- 8 The paper invites further views on setting common arrangements for the three London airports, and also invites airlines to provide data on the impact of extending the night quota period (23:30 to 06:00) to coincide with the night period (23:00 to 07:00).
- 9 The paper also suggests the possibility of further controls within the night quota period to prevent 'bunching' particularly in any shoulder period, for example hourly maximum or separate limits for arrivals and departures.
- 10 The paper quotes the WHO guidelines for Community Noise (paragraph 2.3.4) as suggesting that time varying noise, such as aircraft, almost always exceed the ambient level and as a consequence responses to this type of noise are less likely to be influenced by the absolute value of the ambient noise. This has particular relevance to Stansted which has a low night time ambient noise level and where it has been argued that the degree of disturbance from night time noise will be greater compared to a more urban area.

RECOMMENDED that

- (i) The Committee identify any issues that it wishes to raise in response to the Stage 1 consultation
- (ii) That officers be authorised to respond to the consultation by the 29 October deadline in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

Background Papers: Government consultation paper
http://www.dft.gov.uk/stellent/groups/dft_aviation/documents/page/dft_aviation_029827.pdf