

Heathrow Community Noise Forum: 5 November 2015

Statement by Community Groups

I would like to make a statement on behalf of the community groups who were signatories to the letter to Mr Holland-Kaye dated 19 October. These groups have been involved with the HCNF since its inception but are now expressing growing dissatisfaction relating to the rate of progress of the CNF in particular and the lack of practical steps by the Aviation Industry, represented here today to remedy the situation.

You are all aware of the very significant effect that aircraft noise, often up to 18 hours a day is having on the physical and mental health of the many communities represented at this forum. We wrote to John Holland-Kaye and called for a Heathrow airport specific health impact study. Although we received a response from Mr Gorman yesterday afternoon this does not address the health impact issues we have raised or our other concerns that the CNF has been used by Heathrow in various contexts to support its case for expansion.

Whilst we signed up to this forum in the belief it would be both collaborative and transparent, we now feel this not be the case.

Specifically we object to:

- the fact that whilst a full representation of the aviation industry is present, including the airport operator, air traffic control, the CAA (which is supposed to be responsible for protecting the public from excessive aviation noise) as well as the airport's largest Customer airline BA, to date none of these bodies is capable of stating what has changed, nor accept that material changes have occurred despite data now revealing such changes. In fact no one is accepting accountability for the distress caused by changes that have been permitted over the past two years.*
- the fact that the industry in addition to not accepting responsibility is not disclosing information in an open or timely manner. The Compton Route change is a case in point. Were it not for continued pressure from this forum and affected communities, would NATS ever have revealed the change? If we complain about lack of transparency, or we lack confidence in this process, consider this. How were HAL and NATS able to continue to issue data supporting that no changes had taken place, when in fact changes HAD taken place but data did not reflect that change?*
- the fact that there have been instances recently where, without consultation or notification, HAL has opted to publish its interpretation of analysis in the public domain. This behaviour is unacceptable and rightly leads members to question whether the HCNF is being used for the benefit of HALs commercial ambitions.*
- the selective use of information by HAL. One such example being the public statement by HAL that PA Consulting stated that larger planes are flying 300 feet lower than before when in fact PA Consulting stated that the AVERAGE of ALL planes is some 300 feet lower. HALs interpretation is that things are in fact improving when that is not the case.*
- we now know that planes are being flown from Heathrow deliberately using a stepped form of climb (although this is something nearer a plateau). We believe this is a practice contrary to the CAA ERCD statement of 1999 and also contrary to the Industry Code of Practice of 2012 that Heathrow have signed up to. The deliberate low flying is one of the major causes of suffering amongst communities and in our view represents a wholly irresponsible use of airspace.*

- *the fact that we have to resort to FOI requests for information on how noisy the new generation A380s are. Had HAL been truly pro-active in seeking to protect residents, this information should have been volunteered at this forum.*

These are just a few examples of concerns being expressed amongst the groups.

If HAL and those representatives of the aviation industry here today are truly committed to engaging with communities then we require that:

- *The Terms of Reference are revisited and amended to better meet the needs of the Communities (details to be forwarded to you).*
- *HAL works with communities to formulate an action plan which would result in a return of conditions to an acceptable level at the earliest possible date.*
- *HAL and Industry representatives report accurately to Government that concentration, stepped take offs and other measures taken designed to improve performance is not working.*
- *If HAL is genuinely concerned about the well-being of its neighbours, then it will call for a delay on a decision for further expansion until it has received the local health impact investigation called for in our letter to Mr Holland-Kaye. Without this it is not possible to understand noise effects, either of the current operation or resulting from any intensification or expansion.*

We want to work collaboratively but we need transparency and urgency injected into remedying the unacceptable noise conditions to which communities are now subjected. If we cannot agree on a workable way forward, then community groups will need to consider the value of the CNF as a mechanism to achieve their objectives.

On behalf of

*Aircraft Noise 3 Villages (Lightwater, Bagshot & Windlesham)
Ealing Aircraft Noise Action Group
Englefield Green Action Group
Harmondsworth and Sipson Residents Association
Plane Daft – Ascot
Richings Park Residents Association
Richmond Heathrow Campaign
Steve Bax, Elmbridge (signed in personal capacity)
Teddington Action Group*