

Annual Airspace and Noise Meeting – Questions

Section 1

1. How do you decide where to place the noise monitoring machines? Can these be changed?

Lee Howes (Gatwick Airspace and Environmental Performance Manager) responded:
“There already is a process in place to manage this. Applications for noise monitor placement are made to the Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group (NaTMAG) and NaTMAG decide the suitability of each application. If NaTMAG support the application and there is a noise monitor available, steps will be followed to implement this. Factors considered for the suitability of noise monitors include whether or not the site is overflowed, freedom from obstruction of the site area and accessibility to that site to name a few. There have never been more noise monitors actively operating than now.”

2. Related to the Performance Table [as shown in the complementary slide deck] when referencing 10 flights a week: is that 10 arrivals and departures or 5 of each? Why the minimum of 10 in any case?

Kimberley Heather (Gatwick Airspace and Noise Programme Manager) responded:
“The Airline Noise Performance Table (ANPT) applies to airlines with 10 total monthly movements. This was deemed a reasonable criterion to apply, as it therefore automatically excludes general aviation movements or infrequent visitors to Gatwick, who may not be familiar with our specific flight operations and for whom the ANPT would provide no useful benefit.”

3. How is the Environmental Noise Directive (END) Noise Action Plan (NAP) enforced?

Lee Howes initially responded:
“Gatwick Airport report various metrics, which are presented to, and scrutinised by NaTMAG, which in turn inform GATCOM.”

Graham Lake (Independent Chair of the Noise Management Board Delivery Group) added:
“There are no specific financial penalties regarding enforcement of the END NAP, nor are there focussed targets for key airport stakeholders. Some believe there should be, and it will be interesting to see if the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and Department for Transport (DfT) change this in the future. However, it should be noted that Gatwick’s END NAP is regarded one of the most advanced, published by UK airports.”

4. Does the panel think that the CAA can do the job of the Independent Commission on Civil Aviation Noise (ICCAN), now the DfT has decommissioned ICCAN?

Graham Lake, Warren Morgan and Jonathan Drew collectively replied:

“It is a shame that the Government’s support for ICCAN was withdrawn this year, as it served as an independent body for the all-important topic of aviation noise. It would be difficult for the CAA to take on the vacant role of ICCAN, given their current issues with resourcing, but any change regarding this in the future would be greatly welcome.”

Section 2

1. Why haven't you used the opportunity of Covid to stop night flights completely?

Andy Sinclair (Gatwick Head of Noise and Airspace Strategy) replied: “The airport currently operates well within the night flying parameters set out by the government; it is illegal for the airport not to comply with these requirements. However, the airport itself has introduced various voluntary measures to improve to the extent possible the night noise environment, including a scheduling ban of Boeing 747 aircraft in the night period, and the monitoring of key metrics such as aircraft CDO/CDA compliance. A total ban on night flight movements at the airport would not be feasible for airlines, which for some, need to operate into the night to maintain their schedules, ie when flying aircraft on multiple rotations in a single day.”

2. What is ‘the perfect flight’? Is this perfect for emissions or noise?

Andrew Burke (NATS) replied:

“The flight [*referenced during AB’s presentation*] was a demonstration flight initially from London Heathrow to Edinburgh, and repeated again from Heathrow to Glasgow for COP26. The flight demonstrated various techniques which each contributed to lowering carbon and noise emissions, the further details of which can be readily found online. Some of the perfect flight techniques included washing the aircraft to improve aerodynamics, taxiing to and from the runway on only one engine, continuous ascent and descent profiles, optimised engine performance and the use of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) to name a few.”

3. Regarding future airspace plans is the possibility of a second full size runway being factored in?

Andy Sinclair responded:

“The current plans for the upgrade of the northern runway can occur because the two runways are still effectively treated as only one. Any plans for a fully independent runway would require a full redesign, of which there are none.”

4. How does the quest to reduce noise sit with adding a second runway?

Andy Sinclair responded:

“As part of the proposal to bring the Northern Runway into routine use Gatwick is proposing a legally enforceable noise envelope, which means noise cannot increase beyond that cap. It may seem counter intuitive that movements should increase, but noise should decrease. There is however evidence to support this; in the five years before 2019, traffic at Gatwick increased by 6.3%, but noise (using the 57 dBA contour) decreased by 9.6%. This was largely through investment by airlines in more modern types of aircraft but also through aircraft modification and changes to operating procedure”

- 5. There are lots of claims on environmentally friendly flights. Why doesn't Gatwick report its full CO2 emissions including from the flights using it?**

Andy Sinclair responded:

"Currently, the airport is only responsible for reporting within scope 1 and 2 emissions, which includes the emissions produced directly by the airport and ground operations not the emissions produced by aircraft in the air, this reporting sits with the relevant airline. However, our work on airspace modernisation will directly help achieve reductions in both noise and carbon emissions."

- 6. Can you explain why Route 4 is considered irrelevant please?**
- 7. It's surprising that you don't include Route 4 in your Airline Noise Performance Table as it is the worst performing departure Route. What data have you collected on airline performance on Route 4?**

Andy Sinclair responded:

"We do capture and report on Route 4 performance data, this is presented to NaTMAG. Route 4 has the lowest level of track conformance, but track keeping is still above 90%. The Route 4 Standard Instrument Departures (SIDs) are difficult to fly, especially as the well-publicised court decision - enforced by the CAA through CAP1912 - required a reversion in February 2021 which has shifted the Route 4 SIDs slightly north of the Noise Preferential Route."

- 8. Can you explain the Low Noise Arrival Metric - is it published and how will this help reduce noise for communities near Gatwick?**

Andrew Burke responded:

"The Low Noise Arrivals Metric is complementary to the existing Continuous Descent Operation (CDO) metric, and is designed to reduce the noise impact on the ground. NATS have tested the Low Noise Arrivals Metric using data provided by Gatwick and have produced a working model. It is hoped that the CAA will publish its CAP document in the new year, after which time, Gatwick can fully implement the metric."

Stuart Lindsey (CAA Head of Airspace Modernisation) added:

"The CAA will aim to publish the CAP document early in the new year."

- 9. You need to explain what Continuous Descent Operation (CDO) is?**

Andrew Burke explained:

"Continuous Descent Operation (CDO) and Continuous Descent Approach (CDA) are often used interchangeably, but essentially mean the same thing. A CDO is the ideal glideslope of aircraft coming in to land, rather than a stepped approach which produces more noise and carbon emissions."

- 10. Please reconcile Single Event noise levels heard by residents under the flight paths and the use of 16-hour LAeq figures that seem to give lower figures?**

Andy Sinclair responded:

"Our technical noise experts and the regulator remain convinced that the LAeq provides a good correlation between noise and annoyance, as per the CAA's Survey of Noise Attitudes

(SoNA). However, we do recognise that noise impacts are most effectively captured when using a range of metrics. Hence when we commission Gatwick's annual noise exposure contour reports from the CAA we request that they include types of contours that reflect individual noise events, called 'N above contours'. We will continue to include those noise event contours in our annual assessment of noise impacts around the airport"