

**THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting of The London Heliport Consultative Group held at Wandsworth Town Hall (Room 123), on Monday, 24th September 2007 at 7 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairman

Mr. Roger Bird

Users' representatives

Capt. Richard Poppe (PremiAir Aviation Services Ltd)

Residents' representatives

Mr. Jonathan Harris (deputising for Mr. Dennis Rooke and Mr. Kenneth Fergusson)  
Sir Peter Jennings

Local Authority representatives

Councillor John Hallmark

Observers, advisers and officers

Capt. Christopher Forrest (Operations Director, PremiAir Aviation Services Limited)  
Mr. Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)  
Mr. Steve Mayner (Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Mr. Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Mr. Bob Leuty (Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Mr. Francis de Lima (Wandsworth Borough Council)  
Mr. Max Dixon (Greater London Authority)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Tony Belton, Councillor Maighread Condon-Simmonds, Mr. Ken Fergusson, Mr. Dennis Rooke, Mrs. Eryl Wrage, Capt Ian Field and Capt Paul Watts.

Minutes (30.4.07). On item 1 (Paper A), the minutes of the last meeting of the Consultative Group held on 30th April 2007 were approved and were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

There were the following matters arising from the minutes:-

(a) On the matter of information on helicopter movements, Sir Peter Jennings argued that the operators of the Heliport ought to order their affairs in a way that ensures that

the limit of 12,000 movements a year is not breached and that an excess of even 460 movements a year (as happened last year) was unacceptable. He enquired about what the views of the operators and the Council were on this point.

In reply, Mr. Hutchins informed the Consultative Group that, as of 1st August 2007, a strict new system of rationing movements had been introduced, given that the demand for landing slots was much greater than the supply of slots. The rationing system was being applied fairly among the users of the Heliport. He was confident that this new system would ensure that the 12,000 movements a year limit would not be exceeded.

On behalf of the Council, Mr. Leuty advised the Consultative Group that the Council's monitoring of the numbers of movements had confirmed that last year was the only one in which the limit had been exceeded. He explained that he had read the Heliport's proposals for rationing flights and was of the view that this represented an objective way to ensure adherence to the limit.

Mr. Leuty explained further that the Council receives information on all movements including exempt and non-exempt flights as well as civil, military and emergency flights. He stated that exempt movements on military flights were limited to 1,000 a year.

In response to a question by Mr. Harris on whether the figure of 460 was deducted from the figure of permitted movements for this year and whether any penalties had been applied, Mr. Leuty confirmed that this number had not been deducted and that the application of penalties had not been considered given that last year was the first year that the limit had been exceeded and that the Heliport was now addressing the issue by having instituted a rationing system.

Current works. On item 2, Capt. Forrest informed the Consultative Group that the ground works for the hotel development were now almost completed. The terminal building facilities, which would be improved, would eventually be moved into the hotel development and the entire site would be tidied up. However, otherwise, there would be no changes to the Heliport itself.

Website. On item 3 (Paper B), the Chairman explained that this item had been placed on the agenda in order to publicise the new website. He invited members of the Consultative Group to visit the website, if they had not already done so and invited their comments on it.

In reply to questions by Councillor Hallmark about whether the Heliport was in contact with all flights, Capt Forrest explained that flights over London were controlled by highly skilled controllers at either the Heathrow or Thames Controls, depending on their locations and the directions of flights. He confirmed that the controllers at Battersea were able to take over the control of flights in the area and would be aware of deviations from accepted flight paths, in the case of flights that were coming in to land at the Heliport.

Councillor Hallmark then explained that, as a local Ward Councillor, he receives complaints about helicopters overflying populated areas rather than following the course of the River. He enquired whether, as London had changed considerably since

the time that the Heliport had commenced operations, there might be a case for now reviewing helicopter routes over London. In reply, Capt Forrest explained that airspace policy was a matter for the Civil Aviation Authority. He also explained that, whilst early helicopters had one engine, the design of helicopters was now much improved and that the majority that fly over London have twin turbine engines.

Guidance leaflet. On item 4, Paper C, which was not completed in time to circulate it electronically in advance of the meeting as was intended, was tabled. Mr. Mayner informed the Consultative Group that the leaflet, despite its appearance, was still at proof stage and could be amended to take reflect comments from members of the Consultative Group. He explained that the objective of the leaflet – which would be published in the name of the Consultative Group – was to set out relevant information in respect of the activities of the Heliport by way of a lay person’s guide, in contrast to the amount of detailed information that was available on the Heliport’s website.

Mr. Harris, in welcoming the inclusion of diagrams in the draft leaflet, asked for the inclusion of a further diagram – a draft copy of which he circulated – showing the optimum heights of helicopters in relation to the riverside residential developments on the Wandsworth side of the River, from the railway bridge to Wandsworth Bridge, during landings at and take-offs from the Heliport.

Capt Forrest explained that flight patterns as well as the angles at which helicopters landed and took off, depended on a variety of weather-related factors including air pressures, wind conditions, etc. Accordingly, whilst pilots sought to comply with good practice, a precision approach was not always possible. However, if any helicopter came in at an “unfriendly” angle, their pilots “were talked to” and sanctions were applied to persistent offenders. Capt Forrest emphasised that most civilian helicopters did comply with good practice in landings and take-offs.

Capt Forrest welcomed the preparation of such a diagram which would also help to illustrate to pilots where they ought to be in relation to riverside properties when landing and taking off. He undertook to confer with Mr. Mayner on the diagram depicting angles of ascent and descent, to be inserted in the draft leaflet.

The Chairman, in endorsing the format of the diagram offer by Mr Harris, noted that it would be useful for the diagram to depict all the major buildings along the river between the two bridges on either side of the Heliport. He suggested that, if it were possible to design a similar diagram depicting the other bank of the River, it would be useful to include such a diagram as well. However, he insisted that this should be a matter for the designers of the draft leaflet to determine.

Mr Mayner advised the Consultative Group that he would circulate to members a further draft leaflet which incorporated the elevations diagram together with any additional comments on the draft that he received.

The Chairman agreed with the suggestion by Mr Harris that it would be helpful to publish the leaflet – when finalised – in PDF form on the website. Capt Forrest stated that he would arrange for the leaflet to be published on the Heliport’s website.

Information on helicopter movements. On item 5 (Paper D), the Chairman informed

the Consultative Group that future reports on the number of helicopter movements would provide an indication of the total number of movements for each quarter that formed part of the 12,000 movements per annum of permitted non-exempt flights. Mr. Forrest stated that, in the second quarter of 2007, there had been 3,570 non-exempt flights and in July and August, there had been 1,838 non-exempt flights.

Noise complaints. On item 6 (Paper E), the Chairman suggested that it might be useful to have a benchmark against which the numbers of complaints received could be gauged, for instance were more complaints necessarily received on/following busy days. continuation training flight approached the Heliport on a trial run. The pilot brought his craft in at a much lower level than might be considered appropriate.

Mr. Harris enquired what “‘cutting’ the corner” in the complaints logged under reference numbers 07/018, 07/019 and 07/020 meant. Capt Forrest pointed out that three references appeared to be identical and may have been the same complaint that had been logged three times. He said that he was not clear what “‘cutting’ the corner” meant. Mr Hutchins said that he would check against the original complaint received to seek clarification.

The Chairman commented that it would be helpful if more information was provided against each complaint logged.

During further discussion, Capt Forrest advised the Consultative Group that there had been no repetition of the sort of complaint – involving a military aircraft – that he had reported on at the last meeting. He also advised the Consultative Group that he had received a reply from the Ministry of Defence to his complaint over that incident in which the Ministry had denied any responsibility for the incident.

Project into helicopter noise. On item 7, Mr. Mayner informed the Consultative Group that tenders for the research contract had been received and were being evaluated. The award of the contract would be decided on, on 17th October 2007 and the study would run until the end of March 2008.

Date of next meeting. On item 8, it was agreed that the next meeting of the Consultative Group should be held on Monday, 21st January 2008 at 7.00 p.m.

Any other business. At the end of the business set out in the agenda, the Chairman enquired whether members of the Consultative Group wished to raise any other matters. The following additional item of business was raised:-

(a) Mr. Harris informed the Consultative Group that the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) was currently carrying out a review of helicopter routes and suggested that it might be helpful to have a representative from the CAA at the next meeting to provide a briefing of the outcome of this review. The Chairman agreed that an approach should be made to the CAA to invite a representative to attend the next meeting.

The meeting ended at 7.35 p.m.