

THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of The London Heliport Consultative Group held at Wandsworth Town Hall (Room 123), on Monday, 23rd November 2009 at 7 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairman

Mr. Roger Bird

Residents' representatives

Mr. Jonathan Harris

Sir Peter Jennings

Ms. Eryl Wrage

Local Authority representatives

Councillor John Hallmark

Councillor Jane Law

Users' representatives

Capt Ian Rose

Capt Ian Field

Mr Peter Norton (deputising for Capt Robin Renton)

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. Martin Newton (Wandsworth Borough Council)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor Belton, Councillor Maighread Condon-Simmonds, Capt Robin Renton, Capt Paul Watts, Inspector Phil Whitelaw, Mr. Alan Farleigh and Mr. Richard McGreevy.

Minutes (27th April 2009)

On item 1 (Paper A), the minutes of the last meeting of the Consultative Group held on 27th April 2009 were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes that members wished to raise.

Monitoring of helicopter movements

On item 2, the Chairman informed the Group that a (Paper B) would not be circulated. In place of this paper, and with regard to the monitoring of helicopter movements, Mr. Stanbury showed the Group a recording of movements taken from the camera based at Wandsworth Bridge on 14th July 2009.

Discussion then took place on (Paper C) and Mr. Stanbury reminded members that this item had arisen following a request from the Group that noise levels from the heliport be investigated with regard to encouraging quieter aircraft. It was noted that a new European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) is now responsible for administering noise certification processes throughout the European Union and that the new EASA database provides a comprehensive noise ranking of nearly 300 helicopters which will assist in the extensive task of assimilating database records with the current list of aircraft using the heliport. An analysis would be verified with the heliport operators and a further report prepared for the Group, providing a better reporting system for noise performance of differing craft.

In response to a question from Councillor Hallmark about number of movements for the List B helicopters, Capt Forrest confirmed that the limit of 1,500 annual movements for these types of helicopter is not close to being reached.

Capt Forrest then updated the Group on the last open day held on 8th May 2009, that had been attended by Councillor Belton, Mr. Fairleigh and Mr. deLima and also stated that the new facilities at Bridges Wharf were not yet completed and that an invitation to visit would be extended to all once they are finished.

The Group also noted the circulated list of 'special events' during 2010 that would be likely to add to helicopter traffic.

Information on helicopter movements

Item 3 (Paper D) was received as information.

Police helicopter activity

On item 4 (Paper E and tabled Paper E1), the Group noted that Capt Watts had been unable to attend the meeting, as had Inspector Whitelaw, and the Chairman asked that arrangements be put in place to ensure attendance from the Police at the next meeting in order to discuss these issues.

Noise complaints

On item 5 (Paper F), the Group had before them information on noise complaints and action taken by the heliport in response, between April and September 2009.

The Chairman made the point that he was encouraged that, of the issues raised during the report period, there appeared to be none that presented an imminent danger to life.

Mr. Harris said that a large number of complaints related to military aircraft movements and Capt Forrest stated that these cases were taken up with the appropriate bases with regard to 'educating' the pilots responsible and that it appeared that a change in attitudes was occurring in relation to more 'neighbourly' flying.

Discussion turned to the complaint submitted by Mr. Harris on 25th June, on a shallow approach made by a pilot, and the Group noted the reasons given for this and that pilots often accused of ‘cutting the corner’ were in fact complying with landing instructions to avoid other users.

Ms. Wrage welcomed the increased number of recorded complaints as she felt that this highlighted the success of the complaints measures now in place and the thorough way that these are dealt with. Councillor Law agreed with this point.

River routes - pilot instructions

On item 6, the Group were shown the DVD detailing pilots’ instructions on flying river routes and in particular the Gutteridge to London Bridge route.

Environmental information

On item 7 (Paper G), members noted the Civil Aviation Authority environmental information sheets.

Helicopter activity in Putney

On item 8 (Paper H), Mr. Mayner referred to the e-mail correspondence with Mr. Road relating to helicopter activity in Putney and asked members whether they would wish to consider matters of this kind in future, raising wider issues than the normal complaints before the Group, and with particular regard to opening up the Group’s discussions before a wider audience.

The Group discussed the points within the e-mail, during which Mr. Harris referred to the complaints reports that are currently considered and asked whether it might be possible to ‘name and shame’ those responsible for misdemeanours, with particular regard to the helicopters operated by the Harrods group. In response, Capt Forrest stated that Capt Renton was well aware of the fly neighbourly policy and would be unhappy with any of his pilots that did not adhere to the rules. He went on to say that he was of the opinion that it would not be necessary to ‘name and shame’ and that current arrangements were starting to ensure that best practice was being adopted. The Group also noted that a large percentage of the Harrods pilots are based at Stanstead. Capt Forrest also undertook to contact those pilots who head to the ‘wrong’ side of the river.

Helicopter activity at Battersea Power Station site

On item 9, Mr. Leuty advised the Group that investigations had taken place with regard to the unauthorised use of the Battersea Power Station site for helicopter landing and taking-off and that it had been decided to serve a Planning Contravention Notice in order for the Power Station owners to provide the Council with detailed answers to questions related to the unauthorised use. Mr. Leuty confirmed that Planning Contravention Notices might then be issued against individual helicopter operators, although it appeared that most of the movements were the result of 1 particular operator. The matter of the unauthorised use would then be considered by the Planning Applications Committee with the opportunity for the Council to invite a planning application. Mr. Leuty stated that the Group would be kept up-to-date with progress.

London in a spin - a review of helicopter noise

On item 10 (Paper I), Mr. Mayner advised the Group of the meeting at the Department of Transport and stated that, regrettably, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs were not planning further work on noise. Mr. Mayner also said that the Greater London Authority had not set up a London-wide body to look at the issue either. After further discussion, the Group requested that Mr. Mayner write to the Greater London Authority; Deputy Mayor of London, Kit Malthouse; and London Assembly Member for Wandsworth and Merton, Richard Tracey to raise the issue of the need for a London-wide review of helicopter noise.

UKACC

On item 11 (Paper J), the Group noted with regret the response relating to the Group's request for associate or observer capacity in the Liaison Group of the UK Airport Consultative Committees.

Noise Action Plan

On item 12 (Paper K), Mr. Mayner said that the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has responsibility for London but appeared not to recognise noise at London Heliport.

Mr. Mayner went on to explain that airports in urban areas giving rise to certain levels of noise should be 'mapped'. It was unclear whether London Heliport had been subject to this mapping and found to be below the 55LDEN threshold, or if it had been missed from the mapping exercise altogether. Within urban areas a noise level in excess of the threshold requires mapping and an action plan. He also commented, however, that an assessment of the noise impact of the heliport would be unlikely to result in a significant impact on the heliport's operations immediately.

After further discussion, the Group agreed that Mr. Mayner should write to the Greater London Authority and the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs expressing disappointment at the lack of action to date surrounding helicopter noise.

Any other business

On item 13, no other matters were raised.

Date of next meeting

On item 14, the Group agreed to meet again on Monday, 7th June 2010.

The meeting ended at 8.33 p.m.