

THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the London Heliport Consultative Group held at the Town Hall, Wandsworth, SW18 2PU on Wednesday, 14th June 2017 at 7.00 pm

PRESENT

Councillors

Councillor Torrington (Wandsworth Borough Council) – in the chair
Councillor Belton (Wandsworth Borough Council)

Residents' representatives

Bill Harper (Prices Court Residents' Association – LB Wandsworth)

Users' representatives

Capt Michael Hampton (Capital Air Services)

Observers, advisers and officers

Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)
Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Martin Newton (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Ian Stephenson (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)
Dr Stephen Dance (London South Bank University)
Dr Luis Gomez-Agustina (London South Bank University)
Tim Fauchon (British Helicopter Association)
Jessica Thomas (Greater London Authority)

4 residents were also present.

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Culhane (Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council), Councillor Condon-Simmonds (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea), Christina Smyth (Resident representative – LB Hammersmith and Fulham), Capt Ian Field (Starspeed) and Capt John Roberts (National Police Air Service).

Chairmanship of the Group's Meetings

On item 1, the Group noted the arrangements for the forthcoming municipal year, with Councillor Torrington taking the chair for the meeting in the absence of Councillor Condon-Simmonds.

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On item 2, the minutes of the previous meeting of the Group were confirmed and then signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

Monitoring of Helicopter Noise Levels

On item 3, Stephen Dance and Luis Gomez-Agustina from London South Bank University gave a presentation on the first stage of the noise monitoring study that had commenced at the beginning of May. Members were told of the results of measurements taken from balconies at Prices Court (150m from heliport on Wandsworth riverside) and also at Blantyre Tower (approx. 1250m from heliport on the flight path on Kensington and Chelsea riverside). It was noted that measuring equipment is powered by a car battery, meaning no requirement for residents to plug cables into their supply, and that the intention was to monitor for no longer than a month at each location.

Stephen Dance said that measurements over the 19/5 to 23/5 period showed many incidences of high noise levels attributable to helicopters, fixed wing aircraft, sirens and also drilling in the River Thames, with particular 'spikes' during times of high heliport use. These findings required further analysis and collaboration. Residents had also been asked to keep a log of helicopter movements and Stephen Dance also confirmed that 'spot measurements' would be taken on expected high volume of movement days around Ascot, Formula 1 Grand Prix, etc.

The LHCG were told that arrangements were in place for an online residents' questionnaire. It was noted that the questionnaire would be 'neutral' in that helicopters would not be specifically mentioned. Luis Gomez-Agustina said that the intention would be to also provide 'semi-structured' interviews to complement the online questionnaire and measurement data (although this output is subject to time constraints and interviewees availability). The objectives of the subjective study are to determine perceptions of those affected by the heliport noise, compare these perceptions to the objective measurements and to assess the outcome of the study against most appropriate existing guidance. Luis Gomez-Agustina confirmed that discussions were taking place with Wandsworth's resident engagement team and that Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham, would also jointly approve the questionnaire details and publicise it when ready for online use.

Discussion continued and Simon Hutchins said that the Thames drilling had been outside the May measuring period and asked whether it was possible other underground works had been recorded by the measurements. Steve Dance confirmed that a rig had been in the river at the recording time and said that it would be useful if the heliport could provide details of landings 'to the minute' to assist with comparing with other recorded noise. Simon Hutchins agreed to share heliport data for the 19/5 – 23/5 period. Tim Fauchon reminded members that legitimate Police helicopter activity sometimes occurs late at night or the early hours and that this can include a helicopter hovering for some time over a particular area. During further debate on this issue, Stephen Dance confirmed that the next monitoring phase was set for 16/6 to 3/7 and Simon Hutchins noted the request for heliport information for this period.

Information on Helicopter Movements

On item 4, the quarter 1 movement figures for 2017 were noted, along with the tabled yearly and quarterly totals from 2009 onwards. Simon Hutchins confirmed

that the additional movements since the 2012 low point for movements was attributable to increased numbers of private and commercial flights.

Noise Complaints

On item 5, Stephen Dance said that it would be interesting to compare the details of recorded complaints with data captured by the noise study.

In response to a question about take-off and landing affecting residents, Simon Hutchins confirmed that the arrangements had not changed and that, although larger helicopters now existed, they were not noticeably noisier and Michael Hampton said that the increase in riverside building had the impact of 'channelling' the noise to a greater degree. Following a question about low flights over the Lots Road area in Chelsea, Simon Hutchins told the meeting that a route exists to the north which pilots follow. Michael Hampton stated that pilots would fly at 1300 to 1000ft, but would aim to keep as high as possible until a late stage, before descending over the river.

Discussion continued and, in response to a question about lower trajectory for sightseeing helicopters take-off, Simon Hutchins said that these single-engine craft had a different take-off profile than twin-engine. Michael Hampton confirmed that single-engine helicopters need forward speed faster on take-off. The Chairman asked about the increase in movements and Simon Hutchins told the Group that sightseeing single-engine helicopters accounted for around 50% of the total increase.

A resident from Imperial Wharf, Hammersmith and Fulham, then said that sightseeing flights had operated earlier in the day between 1300 and 1630, and that on the landing apron rotors were not turned off as the next tour group was ready to board, meaning that sound was continuous. The Chairman then raised the question of reducing noise impact from the sightseeing trips and Simon Hutchins said that it would be difficult to reduce overall engine running times whatever measures were adopted. A further question about air pollution was then asked and Michael Hampton said that fuel burn in helicopters is generally very clean and efficient, with very little soot evidence.

Discussion continued and in response to a question from the Chairman about movements and flights that are exempt from the 12,000 movements cap, Colin Stanbury confirmed that it would be possible to ask the planning service to obtain these figures as part of the legal agreement around the heliport's planning permission, and to report them to the Group at future meetings. It was noted that the CAA/NATS only record movements that they handle themselves. Simon Hutchins confirmed that the heliport management had declined to give a reason why a further breakdown of flight movements would not be offered to the LHCG.

Heliport Flights after 10.00pm

On item 6, Bill Harper, and also a resident from Hammersmith and Fulham, raised the question of the number of flights reported to be arriving between 2100 and 2300. At the request of the Chairman, Simon Hutchins undertook to check that these figures had been recorded correctly and confirmed that 95% of heliport movements are between 0730 and 2000, with the remaining 5% outside of that time. He also

confirmed that heliport lighting is not turned off and then on again and explained that the lighting system takes a while to return to full capacity once operated.

Discussion then turned to complaint 04/17 (agenda pack page 13) on a late arriving flight and Simon Hutchins said that investigation of the heliport's CCTV footage did not accord with the nature of the complaint made. The Group then asked that future reporting of movements be in hour-hour periods for easier understanding of busy period trends.

DfT Consultation - National Policy Statement (NPS) and Airspace Strategy

On item 7, Colin Stanbury reported on the recent consultation by the DfT and told the meeting that this consultation had not dealt with rotary aircraft. It was noted that the consultation period had ended on 31st May.

Following discussion, it was agreed that, notwithstanding the closing of the consultation, the Chairman should write to the DfT to convey the LHCG's concern that neither documents mention the need for the Government to plan for future helicopter services in the south east generally and London in particular.

Update on Section 35 Designation

On item 8, members noted the latest response of the DfT to the Group's long-standing aim of achieving Section 35 designation for London Heliport.

After discussion, and at the request of Councillor Belton, it was agreed that a letter be drafted for the newly elected MP for Battersea to send to the DfT expressing the upmost concern at the continued delay in this matter.

Any Other Business

On item 9, the following matters were raised:-

- (i) Tim Fauchon referred to the need for LHCG subscription to the CAA website to ensure awareness of consultation proposals.
- (ii) Simon Hutchins confirmed that Councillor Belton should contact him on arrangements for the newly elected MP for Battersea to visit the heliport.

Date of Next Meeting

On item 9, the Group agreed to meet again on Monday, 18th September.

The meeting ended at 8.30 p.m.