

THE LONDON HELIPORT CONSULTATIVE GROUP

Minutes of the meeting of the London Heliport Consultative Group held at the Town Hall, Wandsworth, SW18 2PU on Monday, 16th November 2015 at 7 p.m.

PRESENT

Chairman

Councillor Culhane (Hammersmith and Fulham Borough Council)

Residents' representatives

Mr Geoff Brindle
Mr David Brown
Ms Christina Smyth

Local Authority representatives

Councillor Speck (Wandsworth Borough Council)

Users' representatives

Capt Michael Hampton

Observers, advisers and officers

Mr Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)
Mr Colin Stanbury (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr Martin Newton (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Mr Guy Dennington (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Condon-Simmonds (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea), Councillor Torrington (Wandsworth Borough Council), Capt. Watts, Ms Humphrey Jones and Mr Walker (CAA).

Minutes - 8th June 2015

On item 1(a), it was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th June 2015 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

The minutes were thereupon signed by the Chairman.

On item 1(b), the following matters were raised:-

- (i) the Secretary undertook to contact Jim Walker of the CAA regarding any progress on discussions with NATS over possible alternate routes in relation to the Norland area. Guy Dennington reported that he had

been in correspondence with Jim Walker over this issue and that talks are continuing; and

- (ii) Geoff Brindle confirmed that he had tried to contact the resident of Altura Tower by e-mail in respect of the resident's continuing concerns but had so far received no reply.

Monitoring of Helicopter Noise Levels

On item 2, Colin Stanbury reported that there had been only slow progress on noise monitoring but further discussion had taken place with Stephen Dance from South Bank University. It was noted that the required monitoring equipment had now been obtained after a little delay, and that this would be used at appropriate identified riverside locations under regular flight paths to measure impact of noise levels, and to produce mapping / contours over certain times of the day. More talks would now take place with Stephen Dance and then Simon Hutchins at the Heliport.

Colin Stanbury said that the intention is to also look at the data collected by the previous on-site measuring device at the Heliport in association with new data gathered from the receptor locations. The measuring should provide an insight into the collective impact of buildings on sound transmission which generally local authorities have not been encouraged to consider.

In response to a question from Christina Smyth, the Group noted Colin Stanbury's reassurance that South Bank University remained committed to the project and hope to involve a PhD student in the research.

Information on Helicopter Movements

On item 3, the Group noted the latest information on movements and Simon Hutchins' comment that these showed a slow, steady increase. This increase amounted to around 16.5% over figures for the comparable quarters 1, 2 and 3 in 2014.

Noise Complaints

On item 4, Simon Hutchins referred to lengthy dialogue with officers at LB Richmond and LB Merton regarding the reported complaint from the resident of Barnes (page 15). It was noted that this area was particularly affected by aircraft noise due to proximity to the river and also to Heathrow.

The Chairman asked about Formula E in June 2015 and Simon Hutchins confirmed that the helicopters used for filming this event (squirrels) were not largely under the control of the Heliport. The Group also noted Michael Hampton's comment that generally smaller aircraft or probably drones are now used for most overhead filming.

Discussion continued and Geoff Brindle told members of noise complaints that he had received and raised the question of helicopters keeping their rotors running whilst waiting to leave the Heliport. Simon Hutchins informed members that a 5minute period was set out in guidance but that the Heliport attempted to minimise any adverse impact as much as possible and to expedite landings and take-offs. It

was noted that a helicopter was more easily able to obtain clearance to leave the Heliport quickly if rotors were already running.

Geoff Brindle then asked about the new riverbus pier at nearby Plantation Wharf and its effect on flights to and from the Heliport. Simon Hutchins said that the Heliport had been able to comment on this development at the planning application stage and confirmed to the Group that a set of guidelines existed in relation to landing / take-off approaches to the Heliport and that there should be no overflying of the pier itself. Michael Hampton stated that pilots would stay away from obstacles and over the middle of the river for as long as possible but that wind speed and direction can sometimes affect usual landing protocol.

During further discussion, Councillor Speck asked about night time sightseeing trips and Simon Hutchins confirmed that, as a single-engine helicopter is used for these flights, the trips could be day time only. He also informed the meeting that the sightseeing trip operators had been given feedback on concerns raised by residents about the way the helicopter turned over head. Christina Smyth then asked about the increase in the number of sightseeing trips at weekends and Simon Hutchins confirmed that Saturday trips appeared to be more popular during spring and summer when weather conditions were more settled. He stated that there would always be a limit on the numbers of sightseeing flights at weekends dependent on the number of 'slots' the Heliport is able to offer. Simon Hutchins also told the Group that similar sightseeing trips also operated from other airfields around the London area and had done for many years. Members noted that an increase in movements would inevitably lead to an increase in complaints.

Submission by Riverside Tower Residents' Association, Imperial Wharf

The Group agreed to consider items 5 (the submission of comments from Riverside Tower) and 6 (LHCG – Way Forward) concurrently.

Christina Smyth referred to her paper and the current position on helicopter use, whereby flights and flight paths are not heavily regulated, and said that this situation often did not provide the public with sufficient information or consultation opportunity. She suggested that a Sub-Group of LHCG members be established for the following:-

- a) to institute work on a set of proposals to propose to policy makers at national level to bring the helicopter flight regime more into line with that governing aircraft to reflect their increasing use.
- b) to work with the Heliport to develop a more comprehensive set of reporting information to the Group, including helicopter movements and noise contours.
- c) that the Heliport should develop ways of communicating this information to the public, including material which can be linked to the borough websites and an explanation of the procedure for complaining.

The Chairman then raised the issue of the current yearly rotating chairmanship between the three boroughs' representatives and suggested that consideration also be given to a revised arrangement that provided for a yearly approval of chairman by

the Group at their meetings and a greater period of time for chairmanship than currently exists in order to provide greater continuity and focus to the role.

Debate took place on the impact of flights and associated noise levels resulting from the Heliport's activities, during which Michael Hampton put forward the view that operators would generally prefer a heliport that was nearer to the centre of London than Battersea but that this was considered unacceptable for planning and political reasons. Geoff Brindle suggested that fixed routes would compound noise impact for those residents nearest to the flight paths and Guy Dennington told members that Kensington and Chelsea had looked at the possibilities of a flight 'corridor' in the Norland area that, although narrow, may provide enough space to slightly vary routes and therefore provide more respite for residents below. He confirmed that this option was being looked into by the CAA. The Chairman asked for a report back on this at the Group's next meeting.

Discussion continued and Councillor Speck said that she agreed with the sentiments in Christina Smyth's paper that additional information is needed from the Heliport along with mitigation suggestions. She confirmed that she supported the idea of a Sub-Group to look into the matters raised. Michael Hampton advised members that operators are always conscious of the need to fly helicopters in the most efficient and quietest way, both to lessen potential for adverse impact for those on the ground and to try and ensure that passengers are given a smooth flight – this translated into the need to handle the aircraft in the most 'gentle' fashion as it is not in anyone's interests to provide a noisy and uncomfortable ride. He also made the point that the helicopter 'industry' is highly regulated in terms of the rigorous training and safety standard compliance that is required. During further debate, Christina Smyth referred to the issue of routine alternation of flight paths which would be more likely to lead to greater respite from noise disturbance for residents. In response to a question from David Brown, the Group then noted Simon Hutchins' response that he would look into clarifying movements on a Saturday and Sunday over the last 2 quarters.

At the conclusion of discussion, and at the suggestion of the Chairman, it was agreed that Christina Smyth would 'take the lead' on the establishment of a Sub-Group of LHCG members with communication through the Secretary via the Group e-mail; and that further consideration be given to the future arrangements for chairmanship of the LHCG at the next meeting. It was also noted that the Secretary would draft a reply to the Riverside Tower Residents' Association.

Any Other Business

On item 7, no other business was raised.

Date of Next Meeting

On item 8, the Group agreed to meet again on Monday, 16th May 2016.

The meeting ended at 8.26 pm.