

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, 8th June 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 Condon-Simmonds (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)
Councillor Speck (Wandsworth Borough Council)
Councillor Torrington (Wandsworth Borough Council)

Users' representatives

Capt Michael Hampton

Observers, advisers and officers

Mr Simon Hutchins (The London Heliport)
Mr Jim Walker (Civil Aviation Authority)
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 Capts. Field, Renton and Watts and Ms Humphrey Jones.

Chairman and Membership of the LHCG

The Group welcomed Councillor Culhane (London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham), Christina Smyth (Hammersmith and Fulham residents' representative) and Geoff Brindle (Wandsworth residents' representative) to their first meeting.

In accordance with the previously agreed arrangements for the rotation of chairmanship between the Boroughs, Councillor Culhane took the Chair.

Members also welcomed Jim Walker (CAA), Guy Dennington (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) and David Egerton-Smith (resident from Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) to the meeting.

The Group noted, with regret, the recent death of Seth Stiles, a former Wandsworth resident representative member who stood down as a member of the Group in 2014.

Minutes - 17th November 2014

On item 2, the minutes of the meeting held on 17th November 2014 were confirmed and signed as correct.

The minutes were thereupon signed by the Chairman.

Order of Proceedings

The Group agreed to consider item 6 as next business.

Helicopter Noise and Disturbance - Norland (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)

On item 6, Guy Dennington outlined the concerns raised by a resident in the Norland ward of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea that were referred to in his paper to the Group.

Jim Walker confirmed that the flight path being used over the area is not an established route but can be used by a multi-engine helicopter after clearance by NATS. It was noted that around 80% of flights are now by multi-engine craft.

With the consent of the Group, Mr Egerton-Smith then asked whether flight paths were not limited to approved heli-routes that generally following the river and Jim Walker said that users of multi-engine helicopters could request NATS to grant permission for a flight away from these usual established routes and that these requests could be allowed by NATS if considered safe. He confirmed that flights of this kind were not considered to represent a safety issue in terms of the rules relating to safe flying altitudes which took account of the 'separation' required from Heathrow traffic.

Discussion continued and, following further questions from Mr Egerton-Smith and Christina Smyth, Jim Walker said that he could discuss with NATS the possibility of alternative routes that could be used over this area and would report back when this information was received. He confirmed that there was no 'hidden agenda' to increase air traffic over any one area.

At the conclusion of discussion, the Chairman thanked Mr Egerton-Smith and Mr Walker for attending the meeting and putting forward their views on the issue.

Monitoring of Helicopter Noise Levels

On item 3, Colin Stanbury reminded the Group that the Heliport had previously indicated a willingness to assist in the proposed new monitoring. Dr Stephen Dance

of South Bank University had confirmed that the project remained of interest to the University.

Colin Stanbury said that a great deal of data existed for the previous noise monitoring at the Heliport itself and that the new proposal would aim to be more community based, mapping the noise levels over a wider area including across the river, to give a greater understanding of the levels at which helicopter noise initiates significant complaints. The next step would be to put the project plan together and to find volunteers in relevant areas that would be agreeable to have the unobtrusive monitoring equipment at their property for over a period of time. He confirmed that no other Heliport to his knowledge in Europe was proposing to undertake a project of this kind.

Christina Smyth confirmed that she would like to have the opportunity of discussing the project with Dr Dance. Jim Walker expressed an interest in the project and in receiving further details for the consideration of the CAA's Environment Department.

Councillor Torrington said that it would be useful if the monitoring was able to identify the various helicopter uses - such as Police, Army, sightseeing, for example – and indicated a willingness to help identify some possible volunteers in the Wandsworth area. The Chairman confirmed that Hammersmith and Fulham would also be in a position to do this possibly by way of newsletter.

Information on Helicopter Movements

On item 4, Simon Hutchins told the Group that the number of helicopter movements is increasing again as the UK economy strengthens. In response to a question from Geoff Brindle, it was noted that the Heliport is now operating at around 75% capacity. In response to a question from Christina Smyth, he confirmed that forecasting of movement numbers is only based on general trends that now indicate increases in the use of the Heliport are likely.

Discussion continued and Capt. Michael Hampton highlighted the changes that have occurred with helicopter use over the last 20 years that have led to greater use, including the airspace restrictions with single engine helicopters, and the fact that the commercial element tends now to all be twin engine craft. This view was endorsed by Jim Walker and the Group noted again that the wider use of twin engine helicopters has meant greater flexibility for operators and more freedoms to fly outside of the 'lanes' that single-engine helicopters have to use.

Councillor Torrington asked whether the monitoring of noise levels project could also look at types of helicopter to try and encourage use of quieter craft and Colin Stanbury undertook to include provision for an assessment of this kind.

Noise Complaints

On item 5, the Group noted the latest position on complaints.

Altura Tower

On item 7, Councillor Speck referred to the comment put forward in the resident's e-mail that '...Wandsworth is taking a less strict approach to the "polluters"...'. In

response, Colin Stanbury confirmed that the Council does not grant any sort of dispensation for the Heliport in relation to allowing air pollution in excess of what would be normally permitted elsewhere. The Group noted that emissions concerns in relation to the Heliport and Altura Tower had also been debated at earlier meetings.

Discussion continued and Councillor Torrington asked whether the Air Ambulance is required to keep rotors running during its visits to the Heliport. Simon Hutchins confirmed that this is not essential but that the concession is offered to the Air Ambulance to help ensure the helicopter remained immediately operational. He confirmed that the use of landing area No. 2 for the Air Ambulance refuelling is entirely based on the requirement for a quicker refuelling and flight away for the helicopter.

The Secretary confirmed that the resident had previously been offered a visit to the Heliport's facilities and that this would again be suggested.

Any Other Business

On item 8, the following matters were raised:-

- (a) David Brown referred to the flying of drones from the riverside walk in the vicinity of the Heliport and the potential danger this might cause to Heliport traffic. Jim Walker confirmed that the person flying the drone was responsible for its 'conduct', that a fact sheet relating to the use of drones was available from the CAA and that unauthorised instances of this kind could be reported to the Police or to the CAA, who would assist the Police were any prosecution to take place.

The Group also noted the danger that could be caused to helicopters targeted with lasers.

The Chairman indicated that facts on these issues may be able to be made available to Hammersmith and Fulham residents via that Council's newsletter.

- (b) Simon Hutchins again referred to the invitation for new members of the Group to make a visit to the Heliport to see the facilities.

Date of Next Meeting

The Group decided to meet again on Monday, 16th November 2015.

The meeting ended at 7.58 pm