



Night Flights
at
Heathrow

questions and answers

Night flights: the present position at Heathrow

- “**night**” is defined by government as 11pm – 7am, **but the “night quota”** only runs from 11.30pm – 6am (it is only during this period that restrictions apply)
- between 11.30pm and 6am, on an average night, 16 flights are permitted. On some nights, there will be more flights, but, over the course of a year, the number must average out at 16
- there are no take-offs scheduled between 11.30pm and 6am. But, if any planes take-off (late) after 11.30 they must be included in that night’s quota
- there are few take-offs between 6am and 7am – during that time both runways are used for landings

over 500,000 people are affected by night flights at Heathrow

Not so silent night		
Night flights to Heathrow – July 8 th 2003		
Time	Flight no.	From
00.13	AA090	Chicago
00.19	BD8801	Edinburgh
04.58	VS201	Hong Kong
05.07	BA010	Sydney
05.10	BA026	Hong Kong
05.12	BA212	Boston
05.14	QF009	Melbourne
05.17	CX251	Hong Kong
05.20	BA028	Hong Kong
05.31	BA016	Sydney
05.33	BA064	Nairobi
05.37	BA074	Los Angeles
05.41	UA918	Tampa
05.44	SQ322	Singapore
05.47	MH002	Kuala Lumpur

Night flights: what the future might look like

The Government is consulting on its future plans. Every 5 years it enters into an agreement with BAA and the airlines over the number of flights permitted at Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick. Exceptionally, the current agreement will last 6 years because of the uncertainty created by the Government's Appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (see p.5). It will now expire in Autumn 2005. In order to give the industry fair warning of changes, the Government will need to have new proposals ready by early 2005.

There are many voices backing a ban on nights flights:

The Mayor's Ambient Noise Strategy makes a night flight ban one of its key priorities;

The Inspector at the Terminal Five Inquiry believed that a ban should be the long-term aim;

A substantial number of politicians - local, national and European – back a night flight ban at Heathrow.

For the first time the Government will be required to measure aviation noise at night. This is a requirement of the 2002 European Noise Directive. The Directive doesn't set noise levels. But the World Health Organisation (WHO) has come up with recommended levels. It says that at night the maximum noise from a passing aircraft should be no more than 60 decibels. That would rule out all night flights at Heathrow. The Government has signed up to the WHO recommendations. It should either adhere to them or explain why it is bypassing them.

UK Governments have stated repeatedly that their policy on night flights is to protect people from exposure to "excessive" noise, but "excessive" noise has never been defined. The forthcoming consultation should include consideration of whether the present definition of "excessive" noise is laxer or tighter than the WHO recommendations, with an explanation for any departure from the WHO guidelines.

World Health Organisation standards would
currently rule out night flights at Heathrow,
Stansted, Gatwick,

Will the Government sort out the way it defines “night”?

The Government’s position is muddled. “Night” is defined as 11.30pm – 7am, but it only sets a limit for the “night quota” period – 11.30pm – 6am.

There are pressures to sort it out:

- The Terminal 5 Inspector recommended that the Government looked at extending the night quota period
- The Secretary of State for Transport agreed it should be reconsidered when he accepted the Inspector’s report in 2001. He said then:

“The Secretary of State recognises that there is considerable concern about night noise amongst people living around Heathrow, and he intends to pursue the suggestion made by the Inspector. In accordance with what the Inspector says, he will consult on an extension of the night quota period when he next puts forward proposals for the night noise regime for the BAA London airports.”

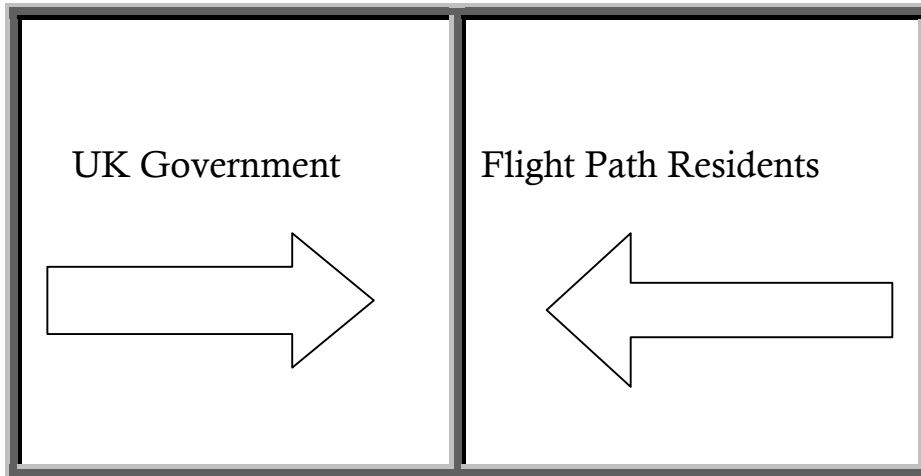
- The EU Noise Directive requires member states to measure noise levels over an eight hour night period.

when people in the UK try to sleep

Average Weekday	Average Weekend
<u>6am</u> : 90% asleep	<u>6am</u> : 96% asleep
<u>7am</u> : 65-70% asleep	<u>7am</u> : 90% asleep
<u>8am</u> : 23% asleep	<u>8am</u> : 75% asleep

Source: UK 2000 time use survey, published by the Office of National Statistics

The troubled history of night flights at Heathrow



The battle over night flights at Heathrow went to the highest court in Europe. Eight residents, all members of HACAN ClearSkies, took the UK Government to the European Court of Human Rights.

- They claimed that, under Article 8 of the Human Rights Convention which guarantees people the right to the peaceful enjoyment of their own homes, they were entitled to a good night's sleep.
- In October 2001, the court ruled in favour of the residents by a majority of 4 to 2. The Government appealed to the Grand Chamber of the Court.
- In July 2003, the Grand Chamber upheld the Government's Appeal. By a majority of 12-5, the judges from across Europe, found that, while in certain circumstances night flights could be in breach of a person's human rights, in this case it argued the UK Government had taken sufficient measures to balance the interests of the residents under the flight path against the competing interests of the national economy, the profitability of British Airways (who operate most of the night flights at Heathrow), and the convenience of passengers. It considered that, in this case, the economic benefits of night flights were more significant than disturbance to residents.

Is a night ban practicable?

Won't it merely move the problem to other countries, as it is not possible to depart *and* arrive during the day because of time zones?

Time zones are unlikely to present insuperable problems. It is on long-haul flights to Europe where it is alleged there could be problems. We consider several examples of routes to/from the UK:

From the East Coast USA - flight time 7 hours, time difference 5 hours - so a departure after 7pm but before 10pm would arrive in the UK between 7am and 10am. Allowing a four hour turnaround, a plane leaving the UK at 2pm would arrive on the east coast at 4pm - no problems with this example.

From the West Coast USA - it is 9/10 hours flight time and eight hours difference making a total time of 18 hours. So a US west coast departure at 6pm would arrive at 12 noon UK time. If it then took off from the UK at 2pm, it would arrive back on the US west coast at 4pm - so again, no night flights at either end, and no scheduling problems.

From Africa - there is only a marginal time difference of +/- 2 hours. So taking Jo'berg as an example, leaving London at 7pm would arrive Jo'berg at 8am - return at 10am, would arrive at 11pm in London.

From the Far East - a 9pm flight to Singapore would arrive at 6pm - you could not do a 24 hour return trip so they would need two aircraft. In which case a Singapore departure at 8am would arrive London at 2pm.

In conclusion, you may not be able to get the businessman to a 9am meeting every time but it certainly looks possible to rota most flights outside the night period in both directions. The main issues for airlines appear not to be different time zones but the threat of competition (who gets in earliest) and cost (maybe some flights you can only make two rotations a day instead of three, forcing the cost up: the airlines would get less trips out of each aircraft and may also, if the rotation became particularly difficult, be required to buy additional aircraft).

The real issue is not time zones, but that it would cost the airlines more if flights were confined to the day

Is the capacity available during the day?

Generally it is. Most airports in Europe have excess daytime capacity even if it is not peak capacity. Some, such as East Midlands in the UK, have substantial daytime capacity. Where airports are full, the city is often served by other airports, eg Heathrow is regarded as near capacity, but London has several other airports with available daytime capacity.

Are night flights commercially necessary?

Necessary for whom? Operators? Charter and low cost operators often utilise night periods so they can achieve three or four rotations a day. With less utilisation avoiding night flights, say 2/3 turnarounds a day, capital costs of aircraft purchase/hire would need to be recouped over fewer operations, increasing operating costs

Isn't next day delivery fundamental to modern business?

The answer to this is earlier collection times from customers – e.g. 1pm deadline instead of 5pm, or later arrival times – guaranteed for 12 noon delivery instead of 9am. Moving these deadlines would place no EU country at any economic disadvantage to any other. It is questionable how many goods currently transported at night qualify as urgent deliveries.

The Government has never produced any evidence to show how many night flights, if any, are essential to the health of the national economy.

So how many night flight are there at other airports?

Night flights are a problem across Europe. Direct comparisons are not easy, but this box gives some indication of the situation.

<u>Airport</u>	<u>Number of Flights (per night)</u>
Heathrow	16 (11.30pm – 6am)
Gatwick	40 + (“)
Stansted	30 + (“)
East Midlands	60 (“)
Frankfurt	127 (11.00pm – 6am)
Dusseldorf	24 (“)
Koln/Bonn	107 (“)
Munich	40 (“)
Charles de Gaulle	162 (11.00pm – 6am)
Schipol	43 (11.00pm – 6am)
Geneva	16 (10.00pm – 6am)
Barcelona	14 (11.00pm - 6am)
Basel*	17 (10.00pm – 6am)
Liege**	70 (11.00pm – 5am)

*59% of Basel's night flights are between 10pm and 11pm

** 35 flights land between 11pm and 2am; and 35 take off between 3am and 5am.

“ Every morning between 4am and 6am, 16 passenger planes, mostly jumbo jets, arrive from Asia and America and land at Heathrow Airport. As their flight path takes them directly over central and west London, they shatter the early-morning sleep of hundreds of thousands of Londoners.

The Economist 17/2/03

Next Stop: Europe

Protests groups from across Europe have come together over the past year. They have already taken part in a Europe-wide conference in Brussels. They have lobbied the European Parliament and staged demonstrations in Strasbourg and Brussels. Over the coming year they aim to get 1 million signatures on a petition calling for a ban on night flights at Europe's airports. In this they have the backing of MEPs from many of the European countries. They are determined not to accept night flights lying down!

This report has been compiled by John Stewart and published by HACAN ClearSkies. Additional research by Gareth Harper, Vice Chair HACAN ClearSkies and Tim Johnson, Director Aviation Environment Federation. HACAN ClearSkies, which represents residents under the Heathrow flight path, can be contacted on 020 8876 0455 at PO Box 339, Twickenham, TW1 2XF, email: info@hacan.org.uk; website: www.hacan.org.uk