

## AVIATION FORUM

THURSDAY, 11 FEBRUARY 2021

PRESENT: Councillors John Bowden (Chairman), David Hilton (Vice-Chairman), Karen Davies, Neil Knowles and Gerry Clark

Also in attendance: Councillors David Cannon, Shamsul Shelim and Gurch Singh, Robert Buick, Peter Willan, Michael Elliott, Margaret Majumdar, Colin Stanbury, Andrew Hill, Malcolm Beer, Mark Johnson and Robert Barnstone

Officers: Andy Carswell, Chris Joyce and Daniel Bayles

### WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked those present to introduce themselves.

### APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Dexter Smith of Slough Borough Council and David Buckley of Datchet Parish Council.

### DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

### MINUTES

**RESOLVED UNANIMOUSLY: That the minutes of the meeting held on February 13<sup>th</sup> 2020 be approved as an accurate record.**

Malcolm Beer stated that it would be appropriate if the names of all attendees could be included in future minutes. The Chairman agreed this should happen for all future minutes.

### NIGHT FLIGHTS CONSULTATION

Daniel Bayles, Community Protection Lead, introduced the item and explained his background and expertise on noise acoustics. He explained that aircraft were generally getting more efficient and quieter. Prior to the Covid19 pandemic airlines had been replacing older and noisier four-engine aircraft with quieter two-engine ones, and the pandemic has accelerated the retirement of the less efficient aircraft. Daniel Bayles explained that British Airways had retired its last Boeing 747-400 in the last year, which he believed was significant as BA was the airline that was the biggest operator of these aircraft. He stated his belief this was one of the reasons why the consultation was being run.

The Forum was told there had been a reduction in the number of aircraft using Heathrow, and those that were flying were quieter. This had improved the noise environment for residents of the Royal Borough. On the other hand however, aircraft noise was excluded from nuisance action, meaning the Council could not take any action against aircraft noise like it could do for a noisy party or car alarm.

The Forum was told that the consultation regarding the proposal to maintain the existing night flight restrictions for the designated airports of Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted from 2022 to 2024 – which incorporated the Council's proposal to ban QC4 rated aircraft movements during

the night – was currently active and was due to end on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. A second consultation that sought early views and evidence on policy options for the government's future night flight policy at the designated airports beyond 2024 was also running, with an end date of May 31<sup>st</sup>. A further consultation regarding the addition of a landing stack to Luton Airport arrivals had closed; Daniel Bayles explained a new stack at Luton would have an impact on Heathrow, with potential night-time landings even though these were theoretically banned. The Forum was told there was no consistent agreement on what constituted night time flying. The World Health Organisation stated it should either be an eight-hour period between 23:00 and 07:00 – which was the typical UK standard – or 22:00 and 06:00. However at Heathrow it was between 23:30 and 06:00, a period of just six and a half hours. Daniel Bayles explained it was therefore not possible to compare all sound levels reported from Heathrow with the WHO standard due to the different criteria used.

Daniel Bayles told the Forum that Boeing were coming to the end of building new 747 planes, and more had been seen coming into Heathrow via other airlines. He explained these aircraft came under Quote Count 4, before giving examples of other aircraft that were classified under other QC bands. The bands were 0.25, 0.5, 1, 2 and 4, with exemptions given to the quietest aircraft. Daniel Bayles also showed on a diagram the differences in noise dispersion comparing QC1 and QC4 aircraft, with his diagram showing a QC4 plane would negatively impact a wider area of the Royal Borough.

Daniel Bayles explained about the noise exposure levels recommended by the World Health Organisation, and how the various levels of noise impacted on people's sleep. A previous consultation showed that exposure levels over the Royal Borough, in areas such as Horton, were much higher than those recommended by the World Health Organisation. However there were differences in the way noise figures were recorded so it was difficult to draw direct comparisons. Daniel Bayles noted that the Council's Joint Strategic Needs Assessment had not identified aircraft noise, and noise associated with Heathrow, to be an issue when it was produced in 2019. He stated his belief this would weaken the Council's position at any future consultation, as it could be pointed out that the Royal Borough had not raised any concerns about noise pollution previously. However concerns over air pollution, and the associated public health issues, had been noted in the JSNA. Daniel Bayles stated his belief that the JSNA should be updated to record the Council's concerns over noise levels associated with Heathrow being an issue for the Borough.

In terms of how the Royal Borough and its residents should best respond to the consultations, Daniel Bayles stated the key points to highlight should be that there should be no dispensation for QC4 aircraft to take off at night, and they should only land at night time if it was unavoidable, such as for safety reasons. He added that night time should be defined as being between 23:00 and 07:00, and that sound levels should be reported in accordance with the WHO standards in order to ensure consistency. Daniel Bayles said the Borough was submitting its own response to both consultations and said the key arguments could be circulated to residents if they wished to make their own submissions, as this would strengthen the overall response in the same way it had done with the response to the third runway consultation. Discussions would take place between officers on how best to disseminate this information to the public.

It was noted that although older aircraft were being phased out for passenger flights, they were still being used on freight services. This had been more noticeable during the Covid pandemic, as fewer passenger services were using Heathrow. Cllr Knowles said that aircraft would generally be retired from passenger service after 25 years, but could then be stripped out and used for freight for another 15 years.

Cllr Hilton stated his belief that in terms of aircraft noise, the overall number of flights landing was important to highlight as the peak number of aircraft caused the most disruption to residents rather than the average rate. The number of landing night flights could be avoided through small shifts in timetables. Cllr Hilton agreed that the public health concerns relating to aircraft noise ought to be highlighted.

Andrew Hill asked if the matter of delta and background noise levels should be raised in responses. Daniel Bayles agreed, but suggested it would be more compatible with the consultation relating to future planning of night flights.

Robert Buick told the Forum he had been trying in vain to be sent data from the Survey of Noise Attitudes conducted by the Civil Aviation Authority, which related to daytime noise levels. He had been requesting the data since January 2017 but had been unsuccessful, even after submitting Freedom of Information requests. He stated his belief the current consultations could not go ahead without this information. He said the Department for Transport had advised him that the data would not be ready for the first consultation but would for the second. Robert Buick stated his belief that the DfT should be lobbied to publish this information in time for the second night flights consultation.

The Chairman told the Forum that there were no noise monitors over central Windsor, whereas there had been some previously.

Peter Willan, chairman of the Richmond Heathrow Campaign, said the group had been carrying out research on noise levels for the past 15 years and it was available to view on their website. He said members had expressed concern at the 'shoulder periods' at the start and end of the night time period and asked if this could be raised in the Royal Borough's responses to the consultations.

Members of the Forum thanked Daniel Bayles for his informative and well put together presentation. It was agreed that discussions would take place between the Chairman and appropriate officers to amend the JSNA document to include concerns relating to aircraft noise and how this would impact on the Royal Borough.

## SUPREME COURT RULING

Chris Joyce, Head of Infrastructure, Sustainability and Transport, reminded the Forum that Heathrow had been successful in challenging the previous decision regarding the NPS being unsound. However, since the Supreme Court decision there had been no further announcement from the government on how the project would proceed. Chris Joyce advised that there had been no indication as to whether the government intended to prioritise pursuing the outcome of the Supreme Court decision. There had been a reduction in Heathrow's ability to continue with the project as it stood due to a number of cost cutting measures that had needed to be put in place because of Covid, with the expansion team being disbanded and staff across the airport being furloughed and made redundant. It was anticipated that bringing the team up to the required staffing levels to proceed with the work needed for the development consent order would take a long time. Chris Joyce reminded the Forum that the Royal Borough had not taken part in the most recent legal challenge, although he added that he had not heard any updates from colleagues at other authorities who had been involved in that legal challenge.

Chris Joyce told the Forum that it was his understanding that the National Policy Statement may require updating, which would then make it more difficult for Heathrow to progress the scheme. Cllr Hilton asked how Heathrow expansion would affect the government's zero carbon proposals. Chris Joyce said the committee on climate change had indicated that net zero carbon targets could still be met with Heathrow being expanded if services to other airports were reduced. In addition Heathrow was doing a lot of work to try and reduce its carbon emissions.

Robert Barnstone of the No Third Runway Coalition advised the Forum there had been a change of leadership at Hillingdon Borough Council, but the new leader was firmly opposed to Heathrow expansion, as had his predecessor. The Council had links to the Prime Minister, who was the constituency MP for the area. Robert Barnstone said it was understanding the government was working on an aviation recovery plan, which was due to be announced in the

summer, due to the uncertainty facing the industry in light of Covid. This was likely to hint at the government's way of thinking regarding planned airport expansion, and there had been suggestions that the government would look to increase regional airport provision. Robert Barnstone said it was his understanding the government was not in favour of expanding Heathrow, but it was not simply a case of 'dropping' the proposals. He added that other legal challenges were being considered.

### NOISE PREFERENTIAL ROUTES

Andrew Hall stated there had been a high degree of compliance with the noise preferential routes; however this had led to an increase in the number of aircraft flying over the centre of Windsor. Peter Willan said there were serious concerns regarding airspace modernisation, and action was being taken without key stakeholders being engaged with. An update had been provided by the CAA within the last month. Cllr Hilton said it remained to be seen how airspace modernisation and departure routes out of Heathrow would be developed in the event of the third runway project being cancelled. He added that performance-based navigation was also a serious concern, as this would create narrower corridors where noise would be concentrated.

It was agreed that the Chairman would meet with Chris Joyce and Daniel Bayles to discuss sourcing a report on airspace modernisation and what steps the Royal Borough could take next.

### THIRD RUNWAY OPPOSITION GROUPS UPDATE

It was agreed there was no need for discussion on this item, as it had already been discussed earlier in the meeting.

### PARTNERSHIP BODIES UPDATE

The Chairman reminded the Forum that the Royal Borough had not taken part in the most recent legal challenge against Heathrow, and there was currently no budget to commit to any further legal challenge. He stated he would remain the Royal Borough's representative for the Heathrow Community Engagement Board, but said he had not received much in terms of communication from the group recently. Robert Buick advised that the scope of the Heathrow Community Engagement Board was being scaled back. Malcolm Beer said the Board produced a useful weekly bulletin. The Chairman advised that Cllr Hilton would be the Council's representative on the Heathrow Community Noise Forum.

### MATTERS ARISING

The Chairman outlined to the Forum how the proposed third runway would impact on Eton in terms of additional noise levels, and gave details of recent night departure times that had negatively affected the Royal Borough.

The meeting, which began at 7.00 pm, finished at 8.23 pm

CHAIRMAN.....

DATE.....