

Regurgitated noise action plan

Gatwick Airport have put out a press release¹ announcing what appears at first sight to be a new 'Noise Action Plan', thus raising hopes among the thousands of people adversely affected by new flight paths that some relief may be at hand. But on close examination, confirmed by Gatwick,² it turns out to be nothing more than the Noise Action Plan which was published in November 2013 and, after a rushed consultation, submitted to the Government in February 2014. Indeed the front cover is still dated November 2013 ! All that has happened is that the Government, after a long delay (waiting for noise action plans from elsewhere) has approved it.

GACC, of course, welcomes any positive action to reduce aircraft noise. But the new so-called Action Plan is well past its sell-by date.

- The Noise Action Plan produced in November 2013 was not new; it was a hurried revamp of the Noise Action Plan produced in 2009.³ GACC believes the job should have been done properly with plenty of time for input from affected communities.
- It was submitted to the Government before the introduction of new concentrated departure routes and before the recent consultations on departure and arrival routes, so there are now many more people with an interest than when it was written.
- Many of the promised actions have already taken place - and people find them disappointing. **The consultation which is promised has already taken place.**⁴
- The Gatwick press release promises to *'Explore whether 'rotating respite' can be provided to communities most affected by noise from aircraft - potentially benefiting more than 11,000 residents.'* Respite on both arrival and departure routes was suggested by GACC in our recent letter to the CAA.⁵ But the only respite proposal the airport has put forward is for a concentrated route to be taken by every arriving aircraft every night - creating misery for the affected communities.
- The incentives in this Noise Action Plan for the use of quieter aircraft are inadequate. Indeed Gatwick has failed to persuade operators of the A320 type aircraft to retrofit a simple piece of kit that would eliminate an infuriating whine as aircraft approach Gatwick. The Noise Action Plan refers to a positive response but since then, the airlines have simply refused to take any action.
- Contrary to what is said in the Noise Action Plan, Gatwick is encouraging airlines to fly more night flights.
- The press release promises that Gatwick will: *'Explore other innovative methods to minimise noise - such as the airport's continuous descent approach, where aircraft use less thrust by gliding and descending at a continuous rate. This approach keeps the aircraft higher for longer and generates significantly less noise.'* But continuous descent approach has been in use since 2000, and 92% of

approaches already use this procedure.⁶

- A useless item is: *'Request that the Department of Transport explores ways to describe and measure aircraft noise more clearly to help people understand noise impacts.'* People understand noise perfectly well, and want less of it!

Gatwick's press release says: *'However Gatwick recognises that much has still to be done to realise the airport's long term objective of gaining the trust of our stakeholders.* A spectacular understatement!

¹ The press release summary is at <http://www.mediacentre.gatwickairport.com/News/Gatwick-publishes-revised-Noise-Action-Plan-95b.aspx>

The full action plan is at

https://www.gatwickairport.com/PublicationFiles/business_and_community/all_public_publications/aircraft_noise/NoiseActionPlan_2013.pdf

² At a meeting of NATMAG, the Gatwick noise committee, held on 25 September

³ GACC's responses to the 2009 action plan, and to the 2013 action plan, are at

<http://www.gacc.org.uk/the-environment.php>

⁴ Gatwick-NATS London Airspace consultation October 2013 – January 2014, and Gatwick Airport Airspace consultation May-August 2014

⁵ www.gacc.org.uk/latest-news scroll to 'GACC says scrap new flight paths' / letter to CAA

⁶ <http://www2.westsussex.gov.uk/ds/cttee/gat/gat240714i15.pdf> page 10