

GACC NEWSLETTER

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Dear Members

[Notice of GACC's 2020/21 Annual General Meeting](#)

In our September 2020 newsletter we explained that GACC's committee had decided to defer our Annual General Meeting, which would normally have been held in November, due to the COVID restrictions. With ongoing restrictions on large meetings such as the AGM still not clear and subject to change according to Covid levels we have decided to hold an online AGM at 19.00 on Thursday 13 May 2021. Further details will be provided in due course but we anticipate providing members with updates on a range of topics including night flights, Gatwick's growth proposals and airspace modernisation, as well as seeking approval of the accounts for 2019/20 and 2020/21, approving an updated constitution and electing the committee.

[Aircraft noise expected to return from May](#)

Since the current travel restrictions were put in place Gatwick has operated a very limited service, sometimes just a handful of flights a day. However, once the restrictions are eased we expect activity levels to increase substantially and quickly, with Gatwick's budget airline community already readying themselves to meet very significant demand. It's too early to know how busy the airport will be this summer, but, based on its own estimates, flight numbers in the second half of 2021 are likely to be at least ten times more than in the first half of the year. Given the reduced traffic volumes that people have become accustomed to, the impact on local communities is likely to be severe.

[Night flights](#)

GACC's response to the government's night flight's consultation is on our website [here](#).

We've asked the government to ban all commercial night flights at all UK airports for a full eight-hour period each night, and to implement that ban in 2022 rather than extend current restrictions for another two years as currently proposed.

If night flights continue to be allowed, we argued they should be limited to those that are genuinely essential for economic reasons, not leisure flights, and that they should be far more strictly regulated. We also argued that the system by which many flights are excluded from night flight limits through a dispensation process is not fit for purpose and should be overhauled so that flights are only excluded in genuinely exceptional circumstances.

We are pleased that there appears to be strong and wide opposition to night flights at Gatwick and elsewhere. We know many of you have responded to the consultation and are very grateful. We've also been in touch with Gatwick area MPs, who have now asked the government to look again at night flights and to take more seriously the extensive health costs they impose on local communities. Their letter is [here](#). In addition, the Gatwick statutory consultative committee, GATCOM, has asked the Government to put in place lower night flight limits urgently, reflecting current reduced usage and taking advantage of capacity that has now become available during the day.

The second part of the consultation, regarding the shape of the future regulatory regime, closes on 31 May, and we'll be in touch on that again in due course.

Noise Management Board work plan finally agreed

Gatwick's Noise Management Executive Board, on which GACC is represented, has finally agreed a work plan. It's been a struggle to get the airport to sign up to any actions beyond the very limited agenda the previous Board has been pursuing before it collapsed in 2019, and we are disappointed that the new plan contains no actions to reduce near term night flight noise. We are also disappointed that many of the actions will take longer than we think necessary to be delivered.

Nonetheless, the plan contains actions on optimising landing gear deployment, departure noise limits and fines, a new low noise arrival metric and an airline noise league table amongst other things. We will be monitoring delivery of the plan and contributing views on key actions.

Airspace modernisation

Gatwick's airspace modernisation plans have been on hold for most of the last year, pending agreement on how the wider national programme would be taken forward and who would fund it. Now that the government has announced that it will provide funding for the next phase of the programme we expect Gatwick-specific activity to restart soon.

The next stage in the process is for Gatwick to develop airspace design options, which will be subject to public consultation in due course. These will be of fundamental importance to communities around the airport and under flight paths. They will determine, for example, how dispersed or concentrated aircraft are, how fast they can ascend and what routes they fly. GACC will be monitoring this process very closely. We have concerns about the design principles developed by the airport in 2019, which favour new capacity at the expense of noise impacts, and have little confidence in the regulatory process through which proposed changes are reviewed and approved.

Air Passenger Duty

You may have seen press reports that the government plans to scrap Air Passenger Duty on one leg of intra-UK return air journeys. GACC's view is that aviation is materially under-taxed and that sector taxes should be increased so that the cost of air travel better reflects the costs it imposes on society at large. We therefore oppose any reduction in APD and will be seeking to ensure that the Treasury's consultation on the subject examines all APD options and the possibility of introducing VAT and fuel duty.

Joining GACC: please spread the word

Please encourage your friends, family and neighbours to join GACC and help protect the interests of communities around the airport and under flight paths. Information on how to join is on our website here: <http://www.gacc.org.uk/contact-us.php>.

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