

Dear Members

Apologies if you feel we've forgotten you but because the critical news relates to activities behind the scenes rather than in the public eye there hasn't been a great deal to publish. However, your committee continues to be engaged in consultations, Gatwick committees, noise management, research on climate change impacts and government policy. This newsletter aims to bring you up to date on these subjects.

Gatwick expansion

Gatwick are still intending to submit a formal application (via a Development Consent Order) to the Planning Inspectorate for permission to develop the emergency or northern runway into an active commercial runway that can be used in conjunction with the main runway. They are currently suggesting the application will be submitted at the end of 2023 Q1 – so the end or March, beginning of April.

We need to be geared up to present sound challenges to the proposals that reflect the feelings of our members in the area surrounding Gatwick and in the wider world. Much as noise is a critical problem for many of us, it is likely that the increased carbon emissions associated with the planned growth (together with the questionable economic benefits) will provide the strongest challenge to the plans. Increasing evidence of the impact of climate change is slowly influencing the national view in the right direction but we need to influence our MPs and Ministers.

To achieve a robust challenge we will need to fund support from legal advisers, climate change and noise experts among others and in the New Year we will be starting a fund raising programme.

Noise Management Board (NMB)

GACC joined Gatwick's NMB at the start of its second term, in January 2020. We did so because we hoped that Board's new terms of reference and leadership would drive meaningful improvements in the noise environment. Since then we've sought to participate constructively and energetically.

The Board's early progress was affected by the Covid pandemic. However, since it resumed we've consistently been disappointed with the pace and scale of its activities. We attribute this to three main factors. First in our view the industry has not contributed to the NMB in the way they committed to. We cannot recall the industry itself bringing forward any meaningful noise reduction initiatives. Secondly community group views are routinely rejected, and we have been excluded from full participation in the delivery of some initiatives. Finally the NMB's leadership has been excessively willing to tolerate prolonged delay in the delivery of the Board's work.

As a result we believe the Board is not achieving the vision and purpose agreed, and is no longer effective. We therefore wrote to Stewart Wingate, Gatwick's CEO, arguing that its term should not be extended until the end of 2023, as presently intended, and that it should instead be wound up now with urgent discussions to see if a more effective set of arrangements can be agreed. Our letter is [here](#). Of the nine groups who participate in the Board, seven have written to Gatwick in similar terms. Apart from an acknowledgement this week we have not received any detailed response.

Departure noise limits

One of the ways Gatwick noise is meant to be managed is through departure noise limits, with associated fines for aircraft that breach the limits. The current limits and fines were set by the Department for Transport in 2001 and have not changed since.

It is clear from Gatwick's own data that the current limits and fines ceased to have any meaningful incentive effect on airlines in about 2005. Between 2015 and 2020, for example, only four fines were levied.

As a result, for some 17 years (and counting) there have been no specific incentives for airlines to reduce departure noise at Gatwick. Both DfT and Gatwick were well aware the regime wasn't fit for purpose, but did nothing for many years. Gatwick is finally engaging on a replacement regime and GACC has submitted extensive comments, which are [here](#) .

Noise Envelope

Government policy requires Gatwick to propose a noise envelope as part of its application to expand the airport by making routine use of its standby runway. The noise envelope is intended to set a limit on aircraft noise at Gatwick and to give effect to government policy, including that the industry must reduce and mitigate noise as airport capacity grows.

Gatwick's September 2021 consultation contained its initial noise envelope proposals. We commented extensively on these in our response to the consultation, making clear amongst other things that they were inconsistent with CAA guidance and government policy, used an inappropriate metric and inappropriate limits and lacked adequate enforcement arrangements.

Over the summer Gatwick held a series of meetings on its noise envelope proposals, in which GACC took a leading role. Although engagement is welcome in principle, Gatwick's was inadequate in almost all key respects. Insufficient time was allowed. The process was chaired by a Gatwick employee, not by someone independent. There was no provision for independent advice. Gatwick refused to provide data that only it is capable of providing and which is essential to a proper understanding of noise envelope options. More broadly the airport did not respond substantively to most of the proposals community groups made on policy, metrics and limits. Our noise envelope presentations and our comments on Gatwick's summary report are [here](#).

We will not know whether the airport has changed its noise envelope proposals until they are published as part of its expansion application next year. But it seems very likely that any changes will be trivial. We will monitor this and be in touch as soon as any further information is available. In the meantime we have asked the airport's Consultative Committee to make clear to Gatwick that the engagement process the airport has undertaken is not compliant with CAA advice and government policy.

Route 4 Discrepancies

A recent statement from Gatwick made at the Noise and Track Monitoring Advisory Group has raised significant concerns for residents located just to the north of the airport in the area impacted by the Route 3 and Route 4 Departure routes. It would appear that documents and charts published over the past 20 years or so have been incorrect in their display of the Noise Preferential Track that is the centreline of Route 4. Thus residents, old and new, have been misled since at least 1998 as to where aircraft are meant to fly on this route and also what impact they can expect.

Night Flights

Night Flights continue to be a major cause for concern. The level of night flying remains close to 100% of the permitted slots with a significant number of flights classified as 'unscheduled'. Our concern is the high number of unscheduled night

slots and the disproportionate number of night slots used compared to the overall number of flights operating at Gatwick.

In response to concerns raised at NATMAG on the number of night flights, particularly the unscheduled flights the airports response was that Gatwick is designated as a 24hr airport and the night slots used are within the DfT (Department for Transport) limits.

Airspace Modernisation – FASI South Workshops

There have been few developments on airspace modernisation at Gatwick since our last newsletter. However, following pressure from the community groups, Gatwick has engaged with parish councils and provided more workshops.

Gatwick Operations

Gatwick's performance levels continued to grow and at July had reached 81% of 2019 levels. Gatwick have revised their overall forecasts for 2022 and expect to make a profit to the year end. Short haul flights have now reached 91% of 2019 levels but long haul is running somewhat behind at 60%. However, as many of you will have read, Gatwick is welcoming back some significant players such as British Airways who are increasing their long haul presence. How that will impact the noise environment remains to be seen, particularly as their long haul fleet at Gatwick is primarily older and noisier Boeing B777 aircraft.

National aviation policy

In October the All Party Parliamentary Group on Airport Communities launched an inquiry into the need for a National Aviation Strategy and the policy priorities that might inform any strategy.

Our friends at the Aviation Environment Federation have provided a robust response, which can be viewed [here](#)

New Minister

The recent changes in government and its leaders have also brought about changes in the Department for Transport. Government appears to have settled down and this week the Secretary of State for Transport is Mark Harper MP, while Baroness Vere of Norbiton has been appointed as Aviation Minister following a previous stint in the role in 2019.

And finally but not least thank you for your continued support throughout the past year together with our Best Wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

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](#)

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