GACC NEWSLETTER

Number 160

October 2026

Dear Members, Supporters, and Friends,

Northern Runway Project:

Gatwick Airport has not yet announced a date for when construction work on the Northern Runway Project will begin, nor even an indication of when a start date might be announced.

The airport says it is continuing to evaluate all aspects of the project and develop a timetable that must accommodate existing airfield operations, alongside other logistical and planning considerations. At last week's Gatwick Noise Forum, discussions with senior management produced the same message: there is still no confirmed timetable for the start of construction.

Meanwhile, local authorities have indicated that they have had no contact from Gatwick to discuss the mitigation conditions to be applied through the Section 106 (S106) agreement.

This raises questions about the progress being made towards putting the necessary arrangements in place to address the project's impacts on local communities.

What might be causing the delay? There are several factors worth watching. The proposed expansion at Heathrow appears to involve numerous conflicts and complications, which may have a bearing on the wider aviation picture. Gatwick's disappointing half-year results and falling passenger numbers may also be relevant.

However, without a confirmed explanation from Gatwick, the reasons for the apparent delay remain uncertain.

GACC will continue to monitor developments and press for greater clarity on the timetable and the measures intended to protect affected communities.

Aircraft Noise:

New Evidence, But When Will Policy Change?

At last week's Gatwick Noise Forum, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and the Department for Transport (DfT) gave a joint presentation on two noise studies published in July: the ANNE and ANASE reports. (Links ANNE and ANASE)

Both reports indicate that aircraft noise can affect people at considerably lower decibel levels than previously recognised in policy and practice. This raises important questions about whether existing noise policies adequately reflect the impact of aircraft noise on people's lives. Its worth noting that the results matched historic data published in 2018 by the World Health Organisation (WHO) – something that at least the DfT and CAA acknowledged but to date have declined to do anything about.

Why does this matter? Annoyance is related to health impacts. For communities living beneath flight paths, the consequences of aircraft noise extend beyond the loudest events. Noise at lower levels can also affect residents, making the way its impacts are assessed an important issue for future aviation policy.

During the discussion, the CAA and DfT were asked when communities might expect to see beneficial changes to current noise policies.

The response suggested that evaluating potential changes would take months rather than weeks. Any proposed changes would also need to be considered at ministerial level before action could be taken.

Questions remain about the DfT decision in the revised Air Navigation Guidance to lower the altitude threshold at which noise is prioritised over other considerations. Historically flight path planners were required to prioritise noise reduction over greenhouse gas emissions savings for all aircraft flying up to 4,000 feet, and also between 4,000 and 7,000 feet unless there was a compelling efficiency argument. The Air Navigation Guidance 2026 replaces that system with a two-tiered priority strategy which lowers the height at which noise is the first priority:

> 1 Below 5,000 feet (Noise Priority): Local noise mitigation and community minimization remain the primary environmental factors for flight paths.
>
> 2 At or Above 5,000 feet (Climate Priority): The priority switches strictly to flight efficiency and carbon reduction. At this altitude, planners can bypass historical noise-routing mandates to map out more direct, fuel-saving paths.

The DfT were asked about how the ANNE and ANASE findings had been taken into account in reaching this decision. The response was that the relevant material had been presented to the Minister, who made the final decision. Regrettably, current Freedom of Information rules mean that we are unable to establish precisely what data and evidence were put before the minister.

For communities affected by aircraft noise, transparency is essential. If new research shows that people are affected at lower noise levels than previously acknowledged, residents deserve confidence that this evidence is properly considered when decisions are made.

GACC will continue to press for noise policies that reflect the real experiences of local communities.

Route 4:

Implementation Still Targeted for Late 2027/Early 2028

There was a more definite update on Route 4 at the Gatwick Noise Forum.

We were advised that work is proceeding according to plan and that the consultation documents have all been submitted to the CAA.

The current target for implementation remains late 2027 or early 2028.

While this timetable remains in place, the effects of any future changes to noise policy and the wider management of aircraft routes will be important considerations for affected communities.

GACC will continue to follow progress and report further developments as information becomes available.

Gatwick's £10 Drop-Off Fee:

Where Does the Money Go?

Airport drop-off charges have attracted national media attention, prompting the Department for Transport to investigate the level of fees being charged by airports.

At Gatwick, the current drop-off charge is £10 per vehicle.

The original purpose of these charges was to encourage passengers to use public transport rather than travel by private car. Only subsequently have airport drop-off fees also come to be viewed as a potential source of revenue for airport operators.

This raises two important questions: are these charges achieving their intended transport objectives, and how is the revenue being used?

Through GATCOM, GACC has put questions to Gatwick seeking clarification on two key issues:

- Public transport investment: How much of the revenue generated by drop-off charges is directed towards improving public transport?
- The impact of reduced fees: If the DfT enquiry results in lower drop-off charges, what percentage increase in private vehicle road travel might follow?

These are important questions for local communities. Encouraging public transport use can help reduce congestion, road traffic and the environmental impacts associated with journeys to and from the airport.

If charges are reduced, it will be important to understand whether this could lead to more private vehicle journeys and what that might mean for roads and communities around Gatwick.

Equally, greater transparency about how the revenue is used would help residents assess whether the charges are contributing to better transport choices.

We will share further information when a response is received.

All these issues matter because airport decisions have consequences well beyond the airport boundary. They affect residents' quality of life, the local environment, transport infrastructure and the future of communities across the Gatwick area.

GACC will continue to seek answers, scrutinise decisions and represent the interests of those affected.

Stay Informed. Stay Involved.

Your interest and support help ensure that the concerns of local communities remain part of the discussion about Gatwick's future.

Thank you for supporting the Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign.

New members are always welcome – please join up here.

The recent legal challenges to the Northern Runway Project have not surprisingly seriously depleted our resources. It has been an intensive and therefore expensive legal campaign:

Please continue to support us with your donations either direct to our bank account or to our Crowd Justice account (which goes direct to our legal team).

https://www.crowdjustice.com/case/gacc/.

Or donations can be made directly to our bank at :

Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign

Nat West Bank plc

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Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC)

Working to protect local communities and the environment from the adverse impacts of unsustainable airport expansion and aviation activity.

