

Airspace Policy Consultation May 2017

UK Airspace Policy Consultation

Submission from: EFRA (Ealing Fields Residents Association), Ealing

The Ealing Field Residents Association (EFRA) represents 2,000 households in South Ealing and shares a boundary with Brentford.

EFRA welcomes this consultation. The points made below are on issues that directly affect our residents:

1. Processes to be followed when flight paths are changed: we welcome the recommendation that processes be put in place to consult with local communities. In particular, the offer of a call-in option by the Secretary of State for Tier 1 (introduction of new flight paths) is a step in the right direction. We are also encouraged by plans to maintain closer links between the CAA and local communities for Tier 2 and 3 changes. We note however that the exact nature of the consultation process is vague at this point ("suitable and proportionate"). We look forward to further details on this. In all cases there should also be a role for a newly formed Independent Noise Authority while noting that its effectiveness in dealing with community concerns will depend on its status and powers.
2. Metrics to be used when measuring noise annoyance: we welcome the DfT's proposed new metrics for measuring noise but are disappointed that these do not quite match the WHO metrics. We understand that these metrics are averaged out over a year. In Ealing, we currently suffer from noise nuisance from Easterly take offs (about a third of the year). A metric is therefore needed that covers just the periods planes are overflying an area.
3. The role of an Independent Noise Authority: we very much welcome the setting up of such a body but are concerned about the DfT's plan to base the Board and Secretariat within the CAA. We feel that this compromises the independence of the new body. We are also very concerned that the Noise Authority is to have an advisory rather than regulatory function. There is little merit in setting up a new body which will turn out to be a puppet of the CAA. We agree with the recent Environmental Audit Committee recommendation that the new body should at the very least have "the ability to enforce its policy recommendations". The new body should also be assigned powers to monitor that policy recommendations are adhered to.
4. We note that there are few references to air quality in the consultation paper. This is a concern given that air pollution levels today exceed the official safe levels around Heathrow in particular. Following Brexit, there is no clarity on the air pollution levels the UK plans to adhere to. In our view, managing air pollution is an important aspect of managing airspace and should feature as prominently as noise management in any future plans.