

Submission by the Friends of Richmond Park to the Discussion Paper on Aircraft Noise

Paragraphs 2.35/2.36 of the Discussion Paper 05 on Aircraft Noise discuss the issue of absence of noise and the value attached by people to quiet areas, such as country parks and open spaces in urban areas.

Richmond Park clearly falls within this category. It is a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a European Special Area for Conservation. It is the largest enclosed urban park in Europe and has 3 million visitors a year. Visitor surveys show that the aspect of the Park valued most is its peace and tranquillity.

Richmond Park suffers from Heathrow aircraft noise in two respects:

1. The Park is just south of the southern approach path to Heathrow and aircraft noise is a constant low-level intrusion for about a mile into the northern side of the Park. The absence of other background noise in the Park and the expectation of visitors that they will find tranquility accentuate the irritation and annoyance of the aircraft noise; many regular visitors avoid this area for that reason. This is a good example of the idea of 'relative noise' discussed in paragraph 3.11 of the Discussion Paper.

2. The centre of Richmond Park is the quietest and, at night, the darkest place in London. We have recorded, with professional equipment, average ambient noise levels of around 25dBA in this area at 9-10pm on a normal day. The area is directly below one of the take-off flight paths from Heathrow and the noise from aircraft when overhead destroys the quiet of this area. The proposals for a third runway would have quadrupled the number of aircraft taking off on this flight path. The proposals did not include any cost for the loss of this quiet; we recommend that the Commission include a value for it in any assessment of the Heathrow options.

We would be happy to provide further information or help in collecting data should the Commission wish.

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September 6, 2013