



# Hever Festival Productions Ltd

Hever Castle, Edenbridge, Kent. TN8 7NG

Admin: 01732 867020  
Box Office: 01732 866114  
E: [theatre@heverfestival.co.uk](mailto:theatre@heverfestival.co.uk)  
W: [www.heverfestival.co.uk](http://www.heverfestival.co.uk)

12 September 2013

Dear Sirs,

## **Discussion Paper 05: Aviation Noise**

I write with reference to the above discussion paper, and apologise for failing to return my comments to you prior to Friday 6 September. However, despite missing the deadline I felt it important to submit feedback on the paper as I operate an open-air theatre located directly under the flight path and hence significantly affected by the overhead aircraft. Our business has been in operation for 31 years.

I have read your paper, and appreciate the merit of your science based approach to the level of noise produced by the aircraft, how it is measured, how it effects the people and environment the planes pass over, and what mitigating measures and compensation schemes could be employed to ease the effects on those adversely affected. Here I shall attempt to describe how all these factors directly impact on our business and the audience of approximately 10,000 who attend our Summer Arts Festival each year.

The frequency of aircraft passing over the Theatre has increased since it started in 1982, in particular in the last 15 years since the ILS was narrowed on the approach to the airport. The planes are not present on every evening that we have a performance, but on the majority (I believe depending on wind direction). When they are flying over they are extremely low and hence loud, it is possible to read with ease the advertising on the undercarriage of the planes' fuselage. Of greater impact however, is their frequency as there is in the region of one plane every 90 – 120 seconds. With approach and departure noise this means that there is very little time (a matter of seconds) when the planes cannot be heard.

Moreover, as they pass directly over the auditorium and stage they create a significant distraction to the action taking place on stage. The direct impact varies depending on the performance taking place, but examples from this summer include drowning out an actor during a play, ruining the quieter pieces during a concert, spoiling the punch line for a comedian and the impact of an emotional scene during a film.

In addition the planes disrupt the peaceful ambience of the gardens of the Grade 1 Listed Hever Castle, which our audience are invited to enjoy before a performance. Having travelled to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty located in the Kentish countryside, and situated away from any major roads or towns this disturbance seems that much the greater as people's expectation is for peace and tranquillity.

Clearly it is not possible to mitigate the noise of the planes as we are an open air attraction. Our business has been successful for over thirty years based partially on its USP that you can enjoy an idyllic outdoor setting and high quality show in the same summer's evening. When that setting is disturbed by the continual hum of aeroplanes, and the show spoilt by the roar of overhead planes, then the presence of those planes is a nuisance for our audience and problem for the Theatre.



# Hever Festival Productions Ltd

Hever Castle, Edenbridge, Kent. TN8 7NG

The increase of air traffic over the past 15 years has increasingly threatened the viability of our business and any further increase in air traffic could render it unsustainable. This would mean the loss of a successful local business employing local people on a seasonal basis, and of a long-standing arts venue providing a wide range of affordable performing arts for its local and visiting population.

Whilst an increase in the number of planes approaching Gatwick over Hever Castle presents a real threat to our business, a reduction in the number could have a positive impact on the experiences of the thousands visiting the venue each year. We would be very grateful if you were to consider widening the ILS approach once again, or shift the approach by a small distance?

I look forward, I hope, to reading the conclusions and recommendations of your review

Yours faithfully

Anna Skinner  
Managing Director