

Summary of non-technical responses to the Airports Commission's Aviation Noise Discussion Paper

The Noise Discussion paper generated the largest number of responses of all the Commission's papers, eliciting over 400 responses. We have published individually, those responses, which sought to answer the specific questions raised in the paper.

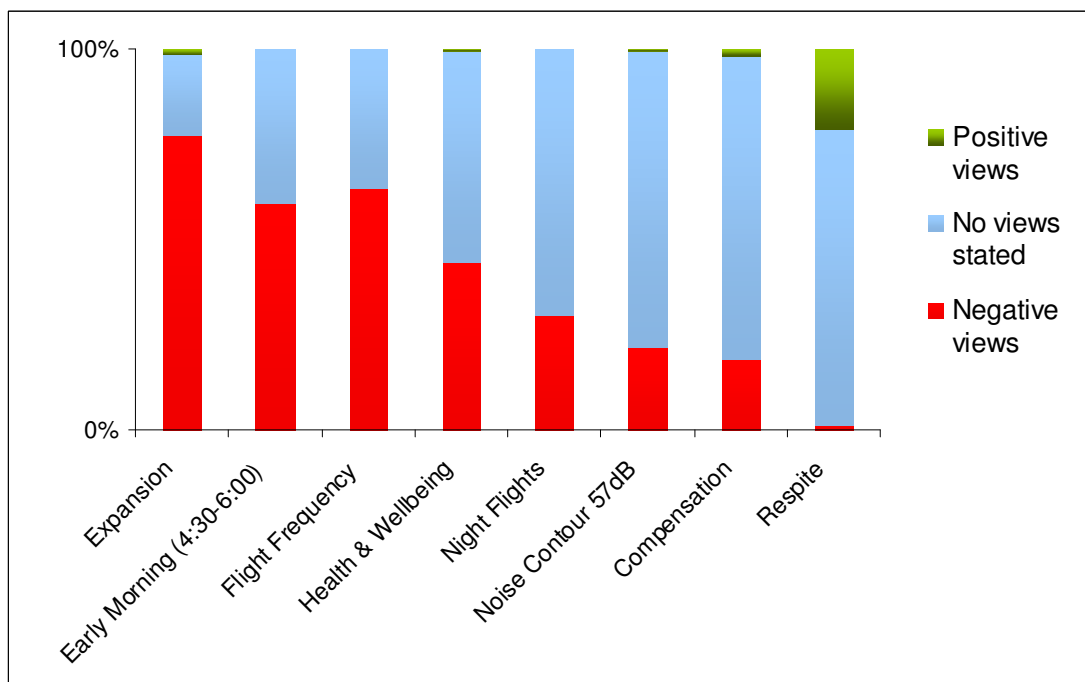
The remainder were non-technical responses from members of the public, the vast majority of which objected, often in strong terms, to the impact of aviation noise on their quality of life. Almost all of these objections, 98%, were made in relation to Heathrow.

Typically respondents lived in boroughs to the east of the airport, the highest number of responses coming from residents in Richmond, Barnes, Kew, Ham, Sheen and other areas in the boroughs of Wandsworth and Richmond upon Thames. However, comments on Heathrow originated from boroughs across South and West London.

Issues Raised

Although most of these responses did not address the specific questions raised in the discussion paper, we have captured the views expressed on a selection of key issues through the categorisations shown in Figure 1. Exact numbers of responses are detailed in Annex A.

Figure 1: Issues raised in non-technical responses to the Aviation Noise Discussion paper



Expansion

75% of respondents expressed opposition to further expansion of Heathrow (and in one case Gatwick). A commonly noted point was that the number of aircraft movements at Heathrow was already high enough and should not be expanded any further.

Early Morning (4:30-6:00) & Night Flights, Compensation and Respite

A majority of respondents discussed one or more of these specific noise mitigation measures.

Approximately half of respondents expressed views on early morning and night flights, with most asking for night curfew hours to be extended, arguing that once awake they found it very hard to go back to sleep.

Approximately 20% of respondents expressed views on the inadequacy of airport compensation schemes, often arguing that compensation catchment areas are inadequate, and double-glazing is insufficient in the summer months when windows have to be left open. A selection of respondents argued that improving compensation schemes should not be used to justify an increase in overall aviation noise levels.

Respite was the only category in which stated positive views outnumbered stated negative views. Generally respondents were grateful for the periods of quiet achieved by operational respite, arguing that this short-term mitigation measure should be expanded.

Flight Frequency and the 57LAeq Noise Contour

Over half of responses expressed concern at the frequency of airplane overflight, which was said to occur at 90 second intervals for many respondents., Approximately 20% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the existing 57LAeq contour used to mark the onset of significant community annoyance, arguing that the contour does not appropriately account for growth in the frequency of noise events. The majority of respondents who commented on the LAeq contour expressed a negative opinion about its usefulness as a method of conveying noise impacts, often noting that houses they considered to be heavily affected by aviation noise do not lie inside its contour.

Health & Wellbeing

Just under half of responses argued that aviation noise was detrimental to health and wellbeing, citing increased stress and tiredness, and in some cases hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Numerous respondents were also concerned about the impact of aviation noise on children, in terms of their ability to get a good night's sleep, to focus in school and to perform academically. A smaller proportion noted that aviation noise often prevented their enjoyment of gardens or local parks.

Other

A number of respondents commented on the specific pitch and the nature of aircraft noise, stating that the sound was particularly annoying compared to other types of noise.

Annex A: Issues raised in non-technical responses to the Aviation Noise Discussion Paper

Categories	Negative views	No views stated	Positive views
Expansion	245	67	4
Early Morning (4:30-6:00am arrivals)	188	128	0
Night Flights	95	221	0
Health & Wellbeing	139	175	2
Flight Frequency	200	116	0
Noise Contour 57dB	69	246	1
Compensation	58	252	6
Respite	4	245	67