

Press Release

1/1/12: *For immediate use*

HACAN calls on Government to ditch for good outdated way of measuring aircraft noise

Current method denies aircraft noise is a problem in Putney, West
London constituency of Transport Secretary Justine Greening

HACAN, representing residents under the Heathrow flight paths, has called on the Government to include plans to change the way it measures aircraft noise in its draft aviation policy, expected to go out to public consultation before the end of March.

The current method the Government uses varies from the one recommended by the European Union. It also contradicts the guidelines for noise annoyance recommended by the World Health Organisation.

The EU estimates that around 720,000 people are disturbed by noise from Heathrow aircraft. The UK Government puts it much lower at less than 300,000.

HACAN Chair John Stewart said: “The way UK governments have traditionally measured noise no longer tallies with reality. Using its method, aircraft noise ceases to be a problem around Barnes. It defies reality to say that people in places like Putney, Fulham, Battersea and Clapham are not disturbed by aircraft noise. We are calling on the Government to ditch this outdated way of measuring aircraft noise.”

John Stewart added, “When drawing up its new aviation policy, the Transport Secretary and Putney MP Justine Greening has the perfect opportunity to bring the way UK measurements noise up-to-date.”

The Government works on the assumption that aircraft noise only becomes disturbing for people when it averages out at 57 decibels measured over a 16 hour day. The World Health Organisation argues that people become “seriously annoyed” by aircraft noise when it averages out at 55 decibels and “moderately annoyed” at 50 decibels. The EU numbers (1) are much closer to the World Health Organisation findings.

When it drew up its noise actions plans in 2009 the UK was required to use the EU method. In its recent report (2), which discovered that 28% all the people in Europe affected aircraft noise live under the Heathrow flight paths, the CAA also used the EU method.

ENDS

Notes for Editors:

(1). The EU uses what is known as the Lden method to measure aircraft noise. It averages the noise out over a 12 hour day; then a 4 hour evening; and finally an 8 hour night. It adds 5 decibels to the evening level and 10 decibels to the night level to allow for the lower background noise levels at those times. The UK Government uses what is known as Leq: averaging the noise out over a 16 hour day.

(2).http://www.caa.co.uk/docs/589/CAA_InsightNote2_Aviation_Policy_For_The_Environment.pdf

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