

The Nightmare of Night Flights

Basic Information

What is a night flight?

It is a flight which lands or takes off at night. Simple! Except, when it comes to night flights, the Department for Transport says **there are two "night" periods**. Although "night" is officially from 11.00pm until 7am, there are only restrictions on the number of flights permitted during the "night quota" period, 11.30pm until 6am.

How many night flights are allowed at Heathrow?

16 flights are allowed between **11.30pm and 6am** on a typical night. Some nights there are more, but, over a year, it must average out as no more than 16 each night.

There are no scheduled take-offs between 11.30pm and 6am. **The first flight arrives about 4.30am.**

Between **6am and 7am**, there are no restrictions. In fact, this is one of the busiest hours of the day. There are over **65 flights**. It is the only hour when planes are permitted to land on both runways, at least for some of the time.

Is this number set in stone?

No, every five/six years the Government enters into an agreement with the airlines into the number of flights that will be permitted to use Heathrow, Stansted and Gatwick airports at night. **The current agreement ends in Autumn 2012.**

Are there night flights at other European airports?

Yes. There is no major airport in Europe with a night ban. Many of the airports have more night flights than Heathrow.

	<i>Airport</i>	<i>Number of Flights (11pm - 7am) (2008)</i>
1.	Paris/CDG	151
2..	Frankfurt	124
3.	Madrid	122
4.	Istanbul	113
5.	Koln-Bonn	103
6.	Barcelona	98
7.	Athens	95
8.	Brussels	94
9.	Schiphol	92
10.	Gatwick	86
11.	Heathrow	82
12.	Stansted	81
13.	Dublin	67
14.	Munich	65
15.	Liege	61

Source: *EuroControl Trends in Air Traffic Volume 5, 2009*

But well over half a million people are overflowed by Heathrow night flights - more than any other place in Europe.

8. Aren't night flights essential for the economy?

Probably not. There are two key reports.

A report commissioned by HACAN* from the respected Dutch consultants CE Delft and published in 2011 concluded that a *ban* on night flights at Heathrow is likely to be *beneficial* to the economy as the economic costs of the ban will be outweighed by

A night flights ban at Heathrow before 6am could bring savings of up to £86 million a year

the savings made by the reduced health costs of the sleep disturbance and stress caused by the noise of the night flights. The cost of a night flight ban is likely to range from a saving to the UK economy of up to £86 million per year to a loss of £3.5 million. A loss would only occur if all current night time passengers stopped travelling to Heathrow once a night flight ban was introduced. That however is highly unlikely.

* Source: *Ban on Night Flights at Heathrow Airport*, CE Delft, 2011

In 2005 a **European Commission report*** argued that night flights boost the economy of Europe. But it was a flawed study. It did not look at the possible benefits to other areas of the economy if night flights were restricted or banned. For example, the rail freight industry might grow. And so would the hotel and catering industries. The main reason given for night flights at Heathrow is that they enable business people to get to a morning meeting in Europe. If these business people could not fly overnight, they would need to spend an extra night or two at hotels in Europe. The European economy would therefore benefit as these travellers spent money on accommodation and in local restaurants and bars. **In short, any losses through a restriction or ban on night flights is likely be off-set by gains (and jobs) in other areas of the economy.**

* Source: *Assessing the Economic Cost of Night Flight Restrictions*, European Commission 2005

9. Are night flights needed from an operational point of view?

No. What is clear from the European Commission's report is that, if they are required to do so, the airlines can reschedule their flights to daytime. Night flights are operationally convenient for the aviation industry, but not essential.

10. Would restrictions/bans in Europe mean more night flights in other parts of the world?

The argument is sometimes made that a ban of night flights in Europe would mean flights would require to land or take off in other countries, some of them much poorer than European countries, at unsociable hours. But that was not the conclusion of the European Commissions Report. It found:

"If the same restrictions apply to all the competing airlines flying the European long-haul routes, they do seem to be able to adapt their schedules and get over slot availability, congestion, and connections, and fly by day." European Commission 2005

- **We have produced a separate 4 page briefing on night flights and health. Available on our website or by contacting us - details below.**