

Night Flights

People's Stories



Photo: Phil Weedon T-Shirt Design: Aspects Ltd

Below is a selection of the emails we have received about night flights

Forced to wear ear plugs every night

Both my husband and I are forced to wear ear plugs every night as well as having double glazed windows which always have to be closed even if it is 30 centigrade. Despite all this we still get woken by night flights. If you have the windows open it feels as if you are trying to sleep on the edge of the runway and we are not even right under the flight path. Our two children suffer in the same way and often complain of feeling tired. My husband has lived here all his life, bar student days, and I have lived here for 30 years so this is our community and we should not be forced out.. Our children went to the same junior schools as their father for example.

East Twickenham resident

Impossible to go to bed before 11.30pm

When Heathrow is on easterly operations it is impossible to go to bed before 11.30, as the departures over Ealing are all heavy long-haul flights, making a lot of noise. It is also impossible to hear Newsnight while waiting for the noise to stop. During the recent bad weather, planes were allowed to take off well into the night without any consideration for the residents underneath. Trying to sleep with a bad chest infection during the worst of the weather, I was listening to regular departures till at least 1am. All those affected by the continuing noise of course have to do a full day's effective work the following day.

Ealing resident

30 years ago the problem was much less severe

Flights from Asia and North America start arriving over central and west London well before 5am. When my wife and I moved to SW3 some 30 years ago, the problem was much less severe - there were fewer flights, they did not arrive as early and the flight approach to Heathrow was shorter so often did not involve overflying Central London. It is extremely irritating to be woken up regularly at 4.30 to 5.00am. Some limited comfort is provided by double glazing and sleeping with the windows shut, but in a country where air conditioning in houses is the exception and not the rule, this is not a healthy or

satisfactory solution. Heathrow should be required to close between 11.30pm and 6.30am so that hundreds of thousands of people in central and west London can get a decent night's sleep.

Chelsea resident

The only answer was to move

I used to live in Putney. Most days the two early Jumbos would wake me up. I had (and fortunately still have) a demanding job, and two babies. The only answer was to move, and pay the monstrous stamp duty for the privilege. .

Former Putney resident

BA's early alarm call

I'm not always conscious of the passing of the first plane in the early hours, but often find myself inexplicably awake at around 5.30am. I lie there and wonder what woke me up, and then there's a roar as the next plane screeches overhead, and I realise, of course, that it was BA's early alarm call. Until we'd bought our house in Richmond and moved in, we had no idea of how disturbing planes could be at this time of day when there's no background noise. We forked out for double glazing in our bedrooms shortly after we moved, but this has not stopped the planes from waking us. In the summer we're faced with the choice of a stifling night with the windows shut or leaving them open knowing that we'll be treated to an even ruder awakening with nothing to shield us from the shrieking of the engines. I can just about live with daytime noise, but night flights make our lives almost unbearable.

Richmond/Kew borders

No way to start the day!

4.30 am: Why have I woken? The answer is in the drone of the plane descending into Heathrow.

5 am: Why am I still awake? Planes.

6 am: Same.

7 am: Time to get up. Why am I so tired? Sleep deprivation because of the planes. No way to start the day!

Brentford resident

Earplugs couldn't block the noise.

Woken this morning by a very loud plane at about 4.30. Five or six more before 5. Then six or seven between about 5.40 and 6. Assume these on north runway. Then non-stop from 6. Misery.

PS Earplugs couldn't block the noise.

Barnes riverside

Double-glazing doesn't work anymore

Where I live double glazing and ear plugs don't work any more. Rothesay Avenue residents are getting very angry.

Richmond residents

And it is not just in areas close to Heathrow that have real problems....

Heathrow noise has swallowed up most of Greater London

We live under the London City Airport flight path; they don't operate flights after 10:30pm. Politicians like to make out that we get nice quiet nights in this area or south east London. We do, if you don't count the Heathrow night flights which start passing overhead from around 4am. They wake us up. In the summer it is even worse and makes it difficult to have the windows open overnight. The noise of

them screeching and droning overhead as they bank over our home to join the line for their continuous descent approach to Heathrow is guaranteed to disturb us most nights. BAA tell us we are beneath the long haul early morning flight path, that's no consolation to us when we are woken most mornings before 5am and find ourselves tired each day as a result. This never happened when we moved to this area 5 years ago - Heathrow aircraft noise has spread and swallowed up most of Greater London. In reality - we only get around 4 hours without aircraft noise a day. Those 4 hours are precious. Stop the night flights.

West Thamesmead residents

The noise was not there when I purchased the house in 1989

I live in New Barnet. Heathrow changes the direction of the night flights every fortnight. So I get peace for 1 week in two. Then the noise starts again. Flights can leave until 0230 and start arriving at around 0415. As you can imagine this level of noise wakes one especially given the times it's occurring. One just gets to sleep & then it starts again. I attempted to obtain a review of my Council Tax as I felt that the noise was not there when I purchased the house in 1989 and that my enjoyment of the property had suffered. This was rejected out of hand by the valuers department! I am still unhappy as I feel these flights are totally unnecessary at these hours.

New Barnet resident

5.15am is two hours before I actually need to get up

I live quite some way from Heathrow in the Borough of Redbridge, East London, but my sleep is regularly affected by night flights from this airport, especially from 4.30 onwards. My Mum, who is 67 years old, is a light sleeper, and is woken up every day in the early morning by Heathrow bound flights. As she gets older this is becoming a very serious concern for her, and for the last decade of her working life, her sleep patterns were particularly disrupted by the night flights. I would like to describe this noise. It is a loud, quite bassy sound, which has a long duration, of up to 25 seconds. The aircraft noise is particularly intrusive when this typical low bass sound sometimes has what I can seriously only describe as an accompanying screeching whine to it. I often go through periods of waking up several minutes before a regular flight occurs, in anticipation of it coming. So the noise acts almost as an alarm clock, but at 5.15a.m, this is 2 hours before I actually need to get up. It is a permanent cause of sleep deprivation for me, as usually once I have been woken before 6a.m I cannot get back to sleep again. It is worth pointing out that London City Airport in East London does not operate flights between 10.30p.m-6.30a.m. Unfortunately this much welcomed "curfew" does not mean so much to me due to Heathrow Airport operating night flights. I think such intrusive flights over London are totally unacceptable through the night and early morning - a crucial period for limited noise. They serve to detract from my quality of life, and do not contribute to London in the 21st century being a "sophisticated" City to live in.

Wanstead, East London

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