

27 FEB 2014

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Your ref: MGLA131213-4231

25<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Boris Johnson  
Mayor of London  
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Thank you for your letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> February 2014 in response to my letter of 6<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

I appreciate your recognition of Heathrow's work with NATS in confirming that there have been no significant changes to flight paths in and out of the airport. Your letter goes on to make a number of wider points on which I would like to comment.

Firstly in relation to noise metrics and the use of the 57dB LAeq contour as an indicator of significant community annoyance. This has been reiterated as Government policy in last year's Aviation Policy Framework (APF). Although we do receive some complaints from further afield most of our complaints are received from residents closer to the airport which is consistent with typical aircraft noise level and annoyance response relationships. This is recognised in the APF in discussion around the use of the 57dB LAeq contour where it clearly states that it does not mean that beyond this point no one will become annoyed by aircraft noise or that all those within it will be. This is a view Heathrow has held for many years and is one of the reasons why opportunities to improve the noise climate both inside and outside of this contour have been taken wherever possible.

With regard to the use of the 55dB Lden contour as an alternative metric, Heathrow has published a range of contours, including those required by the EU Environmental Noise Directive, on an annual basis for the past 5 years. We recognise that while there is an important role for noise exposure contours, they do not represent the only word on the issue. With this in mind, Heathrow has been fully supportive of the need to provide a range of supplementary metrics and we are committed in our Noise Action Plan to continuing to develop new ways to communicate on noise. Indeed we have worked collaboratively with HACAN on this issue over the past few years which included a joint submission into the Governments Aviation Policy Framework Consultation.

Secondly, in respect of the increasing number of people within a particular noise contour to which your letter refers, it is important to recognise the reasons behind this. The increase in population and households within the same noise contour level is largely a consequence of an increase in population and residential development within these areas and not as a result of an increase in noise levels (or indeed movements which have been relatively constant for over a decade). In the case of the recently published strategic noise maps, to which I think your comment specifically refers, this increase is further compounded by the use of a different population dataset. It is essential that there is consistency in this area to enable trends to be more accurately tracked. To help illustrate this point, Heathrow commissioned the CAA's Environmental Research Consultancy Department (ERCD) to compare the 2006 and 2012 Lden contours using their population data for both years. Over this time the size of the 55dB Lden contour had reduced by around 11%, but the population and household levels reduced by only 4% and 8% respectively. This is equivalent to an additional 12,000 households and over 50,000 people within the contour.

Finally, I would like to thank you for your acknowledgement of Heathrow's efforts to make data more accessible to stakeholders and confirm that I share your ambition that our organisations continue to work together to identify opportunities to improve the noise climate for local communities. After successfully working with British Airways, NATS and HACAN (the group representing communities affected by noise from Heathrow) on a number of noise issues over the past two years, we have recently formalised that partnership with the establishment of the Heathrow Noise Forum. This new group brings together a range of stakeholders to identify opportunities to reduce aircraft noise impacts and to develop new solutions. We have had a very positive and encouraging response from all members to date. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to nominate a representative from the GLA to join the group. I hope that you will respond positively to this invitation. As you say, while we may not share the same opinion on the long-term future of Heathrow, in any scenario it will remain the UK's principal airport for some years yet and both of our organisations share the goal of reducing its noise impacts. Matt Gorman ([matt.gorman@heathrow.com](mailto:matt.gorman@heathrow.com)) our Sustainability and Environment Director is the best point of contact for your team to discuss participation in the Noise Forum.

Yours sincerely



Colin Matthews  
Chief Executive Officer

Cc: Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin MP, Secretary of State for Transport  
Richard Deakin, Chief Executive, NATS  
Andrew Haines, Chief Executive, CAA