

PRESS BRIEFING

22 November 2005

Night flights must be reduced, not increased

SASIG has welcomed the Government's promise to "bear down on noise at night" but is telling Members of Parliament that the proposals to increase the existing number of night flights at Heathrow, Gatwick and Stansted make a mockery of the so-called promise which was in the Aviation White Paper 2003.

A consultation on night restrictions to 2012 has just finished. It is intended to limit the number of movements and amount of noise from 11.30pm to 6.00am – a 6½ hour period that SASIG considers is far too short a night for the average person.

But at all three airports the new limits allow for an increase in the number of movements from those that were inflicted on the local people when the Aviation White Paper was published.

- At Heathrow the Government propose an 16% increase from 5,519 to 6,420 night flights by 2012;
- At Gatwick the Government propose a 9% increase from 11,954 to 13,000 night flights by 2012;
- At Stansted the Government propose a 55% increase from 7,694 to 12,000 night flights by 2012.

Although the Government is proposing a reduction in the amount of noise so as to encourage the use of quieter aircraft, SASIG has emphasised that people are more disturbed at night by the number of aircraft and the generally higher levels of activity around the airports.

At the same time SASIG has told the Department for Transport that no evidence has been produced by it or the aviation industry to justify claims that night flights have an overall economic benefit to the UK. Indeed the evidence published so far by the aviation industry seems to assume that, if night flights were stopped, then those passengers would not fly during the day. What an exaggerated claim!

Councillor Richard Worrall, Chairman of SASIG, has made his position clear. He said; "Nobody wants to be woken up at night – it damages their health and efficiency. Equally I don't think anybody really wants to fly at night. It is time the aviation industry started to be better neighbours and gave some consideration to those it affects. I am aware that the aviation industry claims a shortage of runway slots in the day – but I blame them for not working with us and others to solve that problem years ago."

ENDS

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NOTE TO EDITORS

SASIG has a broad national membership of local authorities but does not speak on behalf of the Local Government Association as a whole.