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AIRSPACE CHANGE PROPOSALS

Responding to the NATS (National Air Traffic Services) Consultation

To accommodate an increasing number of aircraft, proposals have been put forward to change the airspace arrangements for the region. The aim of the proposed changes is to provide 'efficiency gains' for the airlines but the result is that while more aircraft will fly over less densely populated areas, there will be a downside. This is because NATS defines noise impact by the number of people affected, rather than by the amount of noise they suffer.

There will be winners and losers from the plans. While there will be relief from overflying for some, overflying over new areas will occur and there will be greater concentration of noise impacts because of precision flying, in some cases over currently tranquil areas.

The NATS consultation closes on 19 June 2008. We are strongly advising all those affected by the proposals, for better or worse, to register their views before this (extended) date.

ACCESSING THE CONSULTATION

Hard copies have not been made available by NATS to the general public but the NATS consultation can be accessed either:

- online www.nats.co.uk/TCNconsultation (note that the document is very large)
- at libraries across the region - ask to see the NATS Terminal Control North consultation

We recommend that you read our 8-page summary note on the proposals which provides useful commentary and background. This can be found on our website at:

www.stopstanstedexpansion.com/nats_summary_2008.html or ask us for a hard copy. .

RESPONDING TO THE CONSULTATION

You should comment on 1) the proposals and 2) the nature of the consultation in your response.

While the NATS website provides the facility to respond online, we suggest you may prefer to send a letter by post so that you can copy it to your MP. Most of the MPs in the area affected by this consultation are taking an active interest in the proposals and it is important that you make them aware of your views so they can make representations on behalf of the community. We also recommend you copy your letter to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) if you comment on the consultation process (which we advise):

Write to NATS at: TCN Consultation, NATS, Freepost NAT22750, Reading RG1 4BR

Copy your MP at: [your MP's name], House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Copy the CAA at: CAA (DAP), Floor K6, CAA House, 45-59 Kingsway, London WC2B 6TE
(cite reference CAP 725 CAA Guidance on the Application of the Airspace Change Process)

Commenting on the Proposals

1. The consultation itself covers five different parts of the region. You should say which area covers your home: East Herts and West Essex; Cambridgeshire, Suffolk and North East Essex; Chilterns and Luton; West and North West London; East London and South East Essex.

2. Describe your understanding of how you would be affected by the proposed changes, stating whether or not you support the proposals, or do not have a view, giving reasons
3. State whether or not you prefer aircraft EITHER to follow the centrelines of the departure and arrival routes (marked in red) which will concentrate the noise impact OR to follow more dispersed flight paths within the boundaries of the routes (marked in black)
4. State whether or not you prefer that during less busy periods when holding stacks are not used, aircraft follow EITHER direct flight paths to the runway, reducing fuel burn and emissions but spreading the noise across the wider community, OR remain closer to the arrival route centrelines which may burn more fuel and produce more CO2 but concentrates noise along a defined path.
5. Describe factors influencing your response (eg. noise, emissions, whether you live in a rural or urban area, or an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, whether you currently experience noise impacts from overflying, how you think your quality of life will be affected and why). In preparing your response, consider the following (see our summary note as well as the NATS consultation for more details) and raise points of particular relevance:

Holding stacks:

- What is the effect of the new holding stacks on where you live/work?
- Ask why holding stacks have been placed inland and not over the sea

Continuous descent approaches:

- How the new continuous descent approach route to Stansted Airport will affect you

Height/noise levels

- Whether more aircraft will be flying closer to you, either by distance or by height
- Whether the level of aircraft noise will increase and if you will be disturbed more at night
- Whether you are particularly annoyed by aircraft noise (e.g. loud, low frequency, tonal characteristic, longer duration) compared with other forms of transport noise
- If you have taken noise measurements, provide the data
- Will noisier take-offs affect you?
- Should departing aircraft stay on noise preferential routes higher than 4,000ft?
- Are there are buildings in your vicinity that would be adversely affected (e.g. schools)?

Flight paths

- Whether new flight paths from the new holding stacks will affect you
- Are you adversely affected by the two new Stansted Airport departure routes?
- What alternative routes do you propose?
- Are you adversely affected by the cumulative impact of the new routes and the unchanged routes (note that many routes over you may not originate/terminate at Stansted Airport)?

Other

- As well as noise, what are visual intrusion and air quality impacts?
- NATS give lower population numbers under new routes and holding stacks. Do you disagree with these numbers and why (eg. proposed new housing developments)?
- Ask what further impact expansion of Stansted Airport will have (e.g. increased use of present runway and second runway)
- What further impact do you foresee if the expansion of air traffic in South East England envisaged by the Government is allowed (e.g. expansion of Stansted, Heathrow, Gatwick)?

Commenting on the Consultation Process

We also urge you to comment on the user-friendliness of the consultation, describing:

1. Your experiences of accessing the document either online or in the library.
2. Your experience of getting answers to questions you may have on the consultation.
3. Your views on the consultation document (e.g. whether it is open and transparent, easy to use, understand and respond to; length of consultation period; omission or inaccuracy of information; ability to question/clarify points with NATS).
4. We recommend you ask why the changes are needed when the airspace is not full and airport expansion is not yet approved.
5. Demand details of the options discarded in the drawing up of this consultation.