## London Assembly tells Airports Commission of impacts of aircraft noise on Londoners and need for better regulation

**Organisation:**London Assembly Environment Committee

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**The London Assembly has** [highlighted](http://www.dodsmonitoring.com/downloads/misc_files/MuradQureshi.pdf) **to the Airports Commission the impact of** noise **from aircraft on thousands of people and the need for a third party to help reduce antagonism in the relationship between communities and airports.**  
   
Figures show 725,500 people are affected by noise from Heathrow airport - three times as many as any other European airport[1]. The Assembly's Environment Committee has told Sir Howard Davies, the head of the Airports Commission[2] how the greatest impacts are on sleep disturbance from early morning and night flights and on some schools under flight paths, where children's learning can be severely disrupted.  
   
Responding to an Airport Commission discussion paper on noise,  the Committee calls for the human impacts of airport noise to be fully considered, including reflecting how some Londoners are disturbed by both Heathrow and City Airport. It is concerned about how noise effects are quantified, with the current Civil Aviation Authority's approach only partly reflecting the available evidence. It also suggests an alternative noise measurement be used to more effectively reflect the impact on people and to trigger compensation[3].  
   
The Committee suggests there is a need to simplify the regulatory environment and highlights the need for a trusted third party to help reduce antagonism in the relationship between communities and airports. It also says any aviation strategy needs to consider the wider context of UK requirements to cut carbon emissions[4] and areas around Heathrow persistently breach limits on air pollution[5].  
   
The Committee states noise from Heathrow affects more people than any other UK or European airport and if more people are to fly to and from the south east, the capacity should be at airports with the lowest impacts per extra passenger. It therefore concludes that noise and other environmental factors should swing the discussion on airport capacity away from expanding Heathrow.  
   
**Murad Qureshi, Chair of the Environment Committee, said:** "The Davies Commission is clearly concerned about aviation noise and is prepared to listen to the concerns of Londoners, many more of whom are now experiencing unbearable disturbance. Once confined to West London, this is now a pan London issue which cannot be ignored any longer.  
   
"We are completely against any expansion of Heathrow, either through increasing passenger numbers or building more runways.  Already thousands of Londoners are unable to sleep at night and many children in the capital have their lessons disrupted by plane noise. Expanding passenger numbers would also go against on-going attempts to tackle air pollution in London.  
   
"The views of Londoners on aircraft noise are crystal clear. We hope the Davies Commission can see the level of concern being expressed by Londoners is now such that it must be a key consideration in any decisions over future airport capacity."  
   
Notes:  
1. See Table 2.2 on P 9 of the Davies Commission [Discussion Paper 05: Aviation Noise](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/airports-commission-considers-aviation-noise) which sets out the number of people affected if a 55dbLden contour benchmark is used.  
2. See the [attached letter](http://www.dodsmonitoring.com/downloads/misc_files/MuradQureshi.pdf) sent to the Airports Commission  
3. The current benchmark for measuring the level at which individuals become annoyed at noise is the 57dBLAeq contour, but the Committee has previously recommended a different measure known as the 55dBLden be used instead. The Committee argued that the 57dB LAeq contour does not fully reflect the numbers of people affected by aircraft noise and is inconsistent with EU requirements for drawing up noise action plans. For more information, the Committee's 2010 report [Flights of Fancy](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/flights-of-fancy-can-an-expanded-heathrow-meet-its-environmental)  
4. The target set out under the Climate Change Act 2008 is to reduce net greenhouse gas emissions by at least 80 per cent below the 1990 baseline by 2050.  
5. For more detail on air quality issues around Heathrow, see pages 17-20  of the Committee's March 2012 report [Plane Speaking](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Heathrow%20airport%20-%20Final%20version_0.pdf) and P5 of the Committee's December 2012 issues paper on Air Pollution in London  
6. The Committee has built up a considerable body of work on the environmental impacts of aviation.  Read previous reports, [Flights of Fancy](http://www.london.gov.uk/mayor-assembly/london-assembly/publications/flights-of-fancy-can-an-expanded-heathrow-meet-its-environmental), January 2010, [Plane Speaking](http://www.london.gov.uk/publication/tackling-air-and-noise-pollution-around-heathrow), March 2012 and a [letter](http://www.london.gov.uk/media/assembly-press-releases/2013/05/government-s-new-aviation-policy-is-a-missed-opportunity-says#sthash.hOU26S2v.dpuf) sent in May 2013 to the Rt Hon Patrick McLoughlin, Secretary of State for Transport by the Assembly's Health and Environment Committee about the Aviation Policy Framework.