**PRESS RELEASE**

22 July 2025

*For immediate use*

**HEATHROW VS GATWICK IS BACK WITH GOVERNMENT UNWILLING TO INTERVENE**

Hillingdon Council have told Parliamentarians that mitigation from aircraft noise at Heathrow should be required at lower levels than is currently set in policy. The Council highlighted the discrepancy in the levels that trigger compensation and mitigation in the recent rulings on expansion at Luton and Gatwick airports. The Government is unwilling to provide guidance to provide clarity to local planning authorities.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Airport Communities heard on Monday (14 July) from Cllr Ian Edwards, the Leader of Hillingdon Council, which acts as Heathrow’s local planning authority (1). Cllr Edwards told the meeting, attended by a cross-party range of parliamentarians, that the trigger for noise mitigation levels should be at the level that has been applied by the Examining Authority in the Gatwick expansion application.

Hillingdon Council have written to government to seek clarity on the appropriate level, but the government’s reply stated that it was down to the local planning authority to decide the level of noise mitigation (2). The Council believe that the policy should be standardised across all airports, with Heathrow committing to the levels that the Secretary of State is minded to agree at Gatwick.

The Aviation Policy Framework (2010) recognises that significant community annoyance begins at 57 decibels and that it expects financial assistance for noise insultation for people who are exposed to 63 decibels and above. Currently, people around Heathrow receive aircraft noise mitigation measures such as double glazing and roof insultation when they are exposed to 63 decibels of noise from planes. However, academic evidence and government policy documents have consistently that noise causes negative health impacts at lower levels than previously thought.

The Council is currently considering proposals for Easterly Alternation at the airport, enabling planes to take off using the northern runway is an easterly direction (3). This has previously not been possible due to the Cranford Agreement, which has been in place since the 1950s.

The issue has come to fruition just weeks before Heathrow Airport and other promoters are due to submit proposals to government for expansion at the west London airport (4). Plans for a third runway have previously estimated to expose up to 2.2million new people living across the whole of London and the Thames Valley to aircraft noise, according to figures held by the Department for Transport’s (5).

At the last Full Council meeting on 10 July, a passed a motion reconfirming the Council’s opposition to the construction of a third runway. It received unanimous support, from Conservative, Labour and Independent councillors from across the Borough.

**Paul McGuinness, Chair of the No 3rd Runway Coalition, said:**

*“Not only does each plane in and out of Heathrow overfly nine times as many people as all other UK airports combined, but Heathrow flies very many more planes than other UK airports. So, like logic being turned on its head, it’s self-evidently absurd that the government would permit a lower noise standard to apply at Heathrow, the greatest noise polluter of them all, than at Gatwick and Luton airports”.*

**Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of Hillingdon Council, said:**

*“Residents living near to Heathrow deserve the same level of protection from noise as that applied by the Examining Authority for the second runway at Gatwick Airport. Government should act and amend Aviation Policy to ensure all residents living near airports are equally protected from unhealthy noise levels.”*

ENDS

Notes:

1. <https://www.airportcommunities.co.uk/>
2. Letter from DfT to Hillingdon Council available on request
3. <https://planning.hillingdon.gov.uk/OcellaWeb/planningDetails?reference=41573/APP/2024/2838&from=planningSearch>
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/proposals-for-heathrow-expansion-information-for-potential-promoters/letter-to-potential-promoters-of-heathrow-expansion#:~:text=who%20submit%20proposals.-,Submit%20your%20proposal,proposals%20by%2031%20July%202025>
5. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/apr/09/heathrow-third-runway-noise-affect-people-government-documents>

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