

## **PRESS RELEASE**

1 July 2020

*For immediate use*

### **PUBLIC ENJOYING PEACE AND TRANQUILITY FROM LACK OF HEATHROW FLIGHTS**

- Almost 3,500 people took part in a survey by the No 3<sup>rd</sup> Runway Coalition on aircraft noise during lockdown.
- 80% of respondents found the experience of fewer flights to be positive.
- 49% noticed the reduction in flights all day long.
- 52% said there had been an impact on their sleep.

Thousands of people from across London and surrounding areas have found the experience of fewer flights to have had a positive effect on their lives, a survey has found (1).

The survey, initiated by the No 3<sup>rd</sup> Runway Coalition, examined the impact on local communities under a flight path during the lockdown period.

From substantial reductions in the level of annoyance from noise, to the absence to its several, distinct negative impacts on health, this atypically large sample from around Heathrow airport's hinterland, seems to have produced a singularly unified report (2).

The most common themes were the beneficial effect of fewer flights on mental and physical health, through a reduction in noise, and (from postcodes close to roads providing access to the airport) an appreciable improvement of air quality (through reduced air pollution).

Of the 80% who found the experience of fewer flights to be positive:

- 46.5 % noticed a reduction in flights all day long.
- 63% said there had been an impact of sleep patterns.
- 82% described a variety of noticeable health impacts.

A range of consequential, positive benefits were also cited, from improved sleeping patterns to greater use of gardens, and greater enjoyment of green spaces.

A wide range of responses was received from across London and surrounding counties. There was also a range of responses from communities near other airports (Gatwick, Stansted, Birmingham, Aberdeen, Leeds Bradford).

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

*"With powerful clarity this survey presents a picture of just what will be lost, in quality of life terms, when flights resume at Heathrow. In the past, residents have been told that it's difficult to measure Heathrow's impacts, because there has never been a flight absence against which to compare them. But lockdown has provided that opportunity. And communities have realised just how detrimental the airport's activities are. Statistically, Heathrow has long been the world's most disruptive airport, as a direct consequence of its location, at the heart of the UK's most densely packed residential community. Flights should be reduced at airports sitting amongst concentrated residential areas, and certainly not increased."*

**Professor Stephen Stansfeld from Emeritus Professor of Psychiatry, Queen Mary University of London, said:**

*"Your survey has revealed striking improvements in local quality of life and perceived health and sleep following the reduction of flights resulting from lockdown. People are reporting both improved air quality and a great reduction in noise. As a society this should make us stop in our tracks and consider whether we shouldn't cut down on air travel in the future. This 'natural experiment' has made us realise the true cost of air travel to the population living around airports."*

**Dr. Anna Hansell, Professor in Environmental Epidemiology, University of Leicester, said:**

*"Lockdown resulted in a remarkable natural experiment, giving an unprecedented reduction in transport levels. While there has been a lot of media attention to the drop in air pollution during lockdown, there was also a large reduction in transport noise. There is little information on the changes in noise to date, so this survey of people's experiences of changes in aircraft noise is very welcome. I note that over 2500 people of nearly 3200 surveyed found the experience of fewer flights to be positive, while only 100 found this to be negative. However, as with any survey, it's important to know about how the respondents came to take part. For example, people who feel more strongly about transport noise may have been more likely to take part."*

**David Simmonds, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Heathrow and Regional Airports and MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner, said:**

*"I welcome the research undertaken by the No 3<sup>rd</sup> Runway Coalition. It is apparent from the survey results that residents under these flight paths have been considerably affected by overhead flights. The travel industry has been transformed by Covid-19, and the country's long-term air travel needs are as yet unknown. We do know that many of us, including my constituents, are spending a great deal more time at home enjoying the outdoors wherever possible.*

*"This research confirms that an increase in overhead flights will greatly disrupt residents' enjoyment of their homes and local outdoor spaces. In this new world we live in, that eventuality is both undesirable and unnecessary."*

ENDS.

Notes:

1. The survey results can be found here: <https://bit.ly/3ilhJzj>
2. Survey ran for 3 weeks between 30<sup>th</sup> April & 21<sup>st</sup> May 2020.

-The survey was conducted using an online questionnaire shared via the Coalition's mailing lists and social media channels.

-To ensure that this was not entirely self-selecting we also paid for an audience panel, (via Smart Survey) which supplied 1128 responses.

For more information, contact:

Rob Barnstone on 07806947050 or [rob@no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk](mailto:rob@no3rdrunwaycoalition.co.uk)