

Noise and Track Sub-Committee

Meeting minutes from Wednesday 13th December 2023 at 2pm

Meeting held virtually on Microsoft Teams

	Attendees		
	Mr Martin Routledge		LLACC Chairman
	Mr David Charles		Bickerdike Allen Partners
	Mrs Rachael Webb		BMKALC
	Cllr Jane Timmis		Dacorum Borough Council
	Mr Steve Braund		Buckinghamshire Council
	Mr Andrew Lambourne		LADACAN
	Mrs Alice May		LLAOL Community Noise Executive
	Mr Alex Wong		LLAOL Airspace Performance Assessor
	Ms Adriana Grigorean		LLAOL Community Noise Executive
	Mr Neil Thompson		LLAOL Operations Director
	Mr David Gurtler		Luton Borough Council
	Mr Gordon Breeze		PAIN
	Mr David Raza		NATS Radar Swanwick
	Mr Nigel Green		STAQS
	Mr Antony Hatch		NATS
1.0	Apologies for absence and substitution		Action
1.1	Cllr Ed Moore – St Albans City and District Council Cllr Chris Poll – Buckinghamshire Council Cllr Michael Muir – Hertfordshire County Council Ms Hanna Joyce – Buckinghamshire Council Ms Christine Urry – Buckinghamshire Council Mr Paul Donovan – Hertfordshire County Council Mr Neil Bradford - LLAOL Head of Marketing & Communications Mr David Healey - NATS		

1.2	<p>The Chairman welcomed members to the December and informed them of the sad passing of Dr David Godfrey the representative for PAIN.</p> <p>Members were reminded on the protocols for the virtual meeting.</p>	
2.0	Minutes and Matters Arising from 6th September 2023	
2.1	The minutes of the meeting held on 6 th September were approved for publication subject to one minor typo.	
2.2	<p>Matters arising that were not being discussed under the agenda included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Item 3.4. Visualisation of Complaints - LLAOL advised they would look at the practicalities of presenting the complaints information on a map. – LLAOL informed that after looking at the issue in some detail it was proving very difficult to map with the data available. Therefore, unfortunately this action would need to be closed off but would be considered again when the new noise and track system was tendered to see if it could be included. It was advised that the Noise Contour Reduction Strategy required to be submitted to LBC as a result of the previous Planning Application for 18mppa was still in abeyance. It was also noted that the airport had received planning permission for their 19m scheme and were now in discussion with LBC regarding submitting the planning application to discharge the similar Condition on the 19m. LBC informed that they had no intention of moving any further with the current permission and would wait for LLAOL to withdraw the current scheme and wait for the new one to be submitted. It was anticipated that this would be submitted sometime in early January 2024. It was expected that the new scheme would show how, by 2028, LLAOL would lower noise levels and what measures would be put in place to achieve the contours required for 2028. The Chairman summed up by stating “what was submitted had been held in abeyance but had now been overtaken by events, LLAOL will be submitting a new proposal and once accepted by LBC the 19m action can then roll forward”. LBC added that there were 3 planning conditions that needed to be approved by LBC before the airport could exceed 18m passengers. The airport also had to serve a notice on LBC stating when they were triggering the 19m. 	
3.0	Quarterly Monitoring Report Q3 2023	
3.1	Total passenger numbers had increased by 13% and total traffic movements by 3%. The total movements in the night period, 23.00-06.59, had increased by 5% compared with the same quarter last year. The early morning, 06.00-06.59, movements had increased by 32% compared with the same quarter last year.	
3.2	<p>The noise monitor results showed the majority of departures still produced noise levels in the range 70-76 dB L_{Amax}. In this period (2023 Q3) 5 daytime departures and no night-time departures were registered at greater than 80 dB. Last year (2022 Q3), the comparable counts were 0 and 0.</p> <p>Members noted that the airlines had achieved Continuous Descent Approaches (CDA), for 95% of all arrivals, and that this was the first quarter when the 95% target had been achieved. This was due in part to improved engagement with the airlines such as EI Al</p>	

	<p>and was expected to continue. LLACC members welcomed the improved compliance on CDA.</p> <p>There were 5 noise violations during the daytime and 3 during the night-time; the majority of violations were by commercial operators and Boeing jets. Members noted that LLAOL continued to work closely with the operators and were sharing some of their radar data with them to investigate issues.</p> <p>The night-time noise contour area was currently very similar to what it was in 2022. It was noted that there were 12 track violations in this quarter due to poor track keeping.</p> <p>The number of complaints decreased from 6,179 in the last third quarter to 5,004 in the same period in 2023. The number of complainants was 319 in the third quarter of 2023, down from 395 in 2022. The number of new complainants was 137, down from 217 in the same quarter in 2022. The largest percentage of complaints related to westerly arrivals. This was attributed primarily to the AD6 airspace change, and it was noted that this was the final quarter when the post implementation review was ongoing.</p> <p>For this quarter, runway usage had been 80% westerly operations.</p>	
3.3	<p>Regarding the limit on early morning shoulder activity (12-month movements), the total for the preceding 12 months was 5,451 (limit 7,000).</p> <p>With respect to the limit on night quota activity (23.30-06.00) (12-month movements), the total for the preceding 12 months was 8,871 (limit 9,650).</p>	
3.4	<p>Members discussed the QMR and questioned whether the 45% 'quieter' aircraft figure applied to all Luton based aircraft or just the commercial passenger fleet. LLAOL advised that the modernisation of the aircraft fleet had increased with over 45% of the commercial jet operators' flights being modernised types in the latest quarter. Following some discussion regarding the percentage figure LLAOL agreed to recheck the figures and report back.</p> <p>The track deviations were discussed, although there were 77 in the quarter only 12 resulted in fines totalling £18k. further discussion ensued and with assistance from the NATS radar specialist who was in attendance it was explained that deviations can be instructed by air traffic control for a number of safety reasons including weather and issues on the ground. These may relate to storms not necessarily in the immediate vicinity of the airport. It was noted that there were several storms during the quarter.</p> <p>Members discussed the LLAOL report in the QMR relating to the fixed noise monitor results for Q3 2023 and their comparison of the measured noise levels at the fixed noise monitors in Q3 2014. The format of the comparison had been updated from an earlier presentation to detail the number of movements in addition to their noise levels. The comparisons showed a reduction in the noise levels from individual aircraft over time, but an increase in the number of movements, particularly at night. It was noted that for 2023 there were 15% more day departures and 46% more night departures than in 2014. Members highlighted that although it was clear that the fleet mix was now quieter than in 2014, there was a significant increase in the number of flights. Thus the impact on people on the ground would be about the same or worse.</p>	LLAOL

	<p>In relation to complaints, it was noted by members that the numbers remained high albeit that the location of complainants had to some extent changed. It was felt that despite the ongoing modernisation of the aircraft fleet the majority of complaints continued to be noise related and that LLAOL were still not at a point where they were mitigating the ongoing noise concerns raised by local communities. It was also stated by members that with every advance that is made for a quieter fleet, it was compromised by increases in movements resulting in more noise events; therefore, it was not quieter on the ground. LLAOL advised members that Luton did have one of the most modernised aircraft fleets in Europe and that aircraft were getting quieter. This was a move in the right direction albeit that there was still some way to go. LLAOL added that they had targets they wanted to meet over the next few years and were heavily incentivising all of their commercial carriers to have the quietest, most modern aircraft available. Also, with the bigger aircraft there would be fewer movements because of the passenger cap. Discussion ensued regarding the various modern fleet types the carriers were already operating.</p> <p>In relation to the previous QMR for (2023 Q2) LLAOL advised that they had rectified the errors in the forecasts originally presented, and that the website now had the correct version.</p>	
4.0	Airport Updates	
4.1	<p>Arrivals / Departure Code of Practice - LLAOL presented how the ACOP and DCOP fitted into the operational controls at the airport, with their role being to provide advice on operational techniques aimed at improving the environmental impact. The Chairman stated that some of the items that were in the Code of Practice for the airport were not necessarily in the airlines' own Codes of Practice as each operates to its own procedures.</p> <p>Specific details in the ACOP were discussed. Firstly, the phrase under <i>1.6 Continuous Descent Operation (CDO)</i> that 'CDO is currently considered by a number of operators'. It was clarified that CDO is something that pilots seek to undertake and that ATC will be instructing them to perform unless specific conditions do not permit it.</p> <p>In relation to <i>1.9 Delayed Landing Gear Operation</i> LLAOL advised that while they encourage delaying deployment of the undercarriage, they are currently unable to monitor when it occurs. However, an action in the new Noise Action Plan was to investigate how monitoring could be undertaken.</p> <p>The reasons for go arounds under <i>1.10 Go-arounds</i> were also discussed and this would feed into the associated NTSC project.</p> <p>Specific details in the DCOP were discussed including the use of Single Engine Taxi Operation (SETO). The procedure is encouraged by LLAOL and is performed by some airlines, who benefit from a fuel saving when doing so. The practice is not restricted to specific aircraft types, although some types do require a longer period to prepare their engines for departure which can reduce the occasions when they can take advantage of SETO. To assist operators ATC try to provide the best information on departure times but</p>	

	<p>this is harder to manage due to overflights from other airports, in particular London City Airport. The Chairman commented that feedback from FLOPSC was that NEO variants took slightly longer to start and thus might not always be able to undertake single-engine taxiing; nevertheless, pilots commented they do try to do this whenever practicable.</p> <p>Reference is made under <i>2.3 Route Adherence</i> to speed profiles. DCOP strongly advises that aircraft operate within normal speed profiles but cannot make a mandatory requirement as the document is guidance. The speed of departing aircraft is monitored as part of the oversight by ATC.</p> <p>Members thanked the airport for the documents. Further comment was made by the representative from ATC Terminal Control in Swanwick who informed on the uniqueness of Luton's operation from the Terminal Control perspective who have limitations on judging when aircraft can become airborne because of the interaction Luton have with departures from London City and many of the smaller airfields such as Denham and Elstree. Luton departures can sometimes be suspended to facilitate departures of other aircraft from other airfields which is quite unique in the London TMA.</p> <p>Summer 2024 Noise Contours - LLAOL presented the forecast contour areas for Summer 2024 which showed they would be within the limits and were based on the airport operating at no more than 18 mppa and with the same additional control on activity at night as were in place in Summer 2023. It was also noted that with the continued fleet modernisation taking place it was hoped that this would improve further. LLAOL stated that this was LLAOL's forecast as the slot coordination process did not complete until the end of January 2024 and was therefore a best calculation until the airlines had been allocated slots.</p> <p>LLAOL referred to the 2023 Contour results and informed Luton were well with the Contour for both the daytime and nighttime contour area.</p> <p>Noise Monitoring programme 2024 - LLAOL presented the noise monitoring schedule for 2024. The classification of the locations exposed to noise from primarily easterly or westerly operations was queried. It was noted that irrespective of the classification the monitoring would record the noise from all aircraft operations. LLAOL agreed to review locations again to ensure they were captured on the correct easterly or westerly operation.</p> <p>Flight Operations Committee (FLOPSC) - LLAOL reported on the FLOPSC meeting held in November. The topics discussed included CDA performance, Noise and Track performance and track violations that occurred over the summer months and Airspace Change AD6.</p> <p>NATS also proposed to set up a twice-yearly working group to discuss all things operational between LLAOL, NATS and the operators; this was similar to what takes place at Stansted where it was proving useful.</p> <p>The Chairman added that whilst it was noted that operators remain engaged, attendance at the last FLOPSC meeting was limited. The Chairman updated on further items</p>	LLAOL
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	discussed including the whining noise of aircraft during airbrake usage and the airport's discouragement of early arrivals to keep out of the shoulder periods in the morning.	
5.0	Local Noise Surgeries	
	<p>The committee discussed the purpose, arrangements and outcomes of the surgeries following concerns raised from an attendee.</p> <p>The purpose of the surgeries was to allow the public to engage with the airport, ask questions and raise concerns on a one to one basis. This is one reason why the recent surgeries involve attendees booking slots as it allows the event to be suitably resourced so attendees get the opportunity to raise matters and do not have to wait for an extended period. LLAOL advised they were also looking to involve other specialists at events.</p> <p>Concern was expressed that the promotion of the events could be improved. LLAOL advised that they utilised local councillors, local complainants (who had advised they could be contacted), and also had a schedule on the website. A suggestion was made to coordinate the events with local noise monitoring and LLAOL agreed to look into what was possible. Other methods of communication such as Facebook groups were also discussed.</p>	LLAOL
6.0	Any Other Business	
	<p>Noise performance of EL AL B737-900ER aircraft – A member asked that the noise averages of the B737-900 to be included in the QMRs to inform the NTSC because it appeared to be the loudest type now flying from Luton. The operation and noise performance of the EL AL B737-900ER was discussed. This aircraft is the largest of the older generation Boeing 737's and EL AL operate it to Israel, a distant location compared to most flights from the Luton Airport. It was therefore heavier than most of the flights from the airport, and potentially also has a high load factor. At present the noise levels from it were not specifically identified in the QMR as opposed to some other types, due to it forming a relatively small proportion of the total movements. Information was also sought on load factors and LLAOL agreed to provide the noise figures for the QMR and to look at what could be provided on load factors given the commercial nature of this information.</p> <p>Eastern Descent Profiles – At the NTSC meeting in June LADACAN gave a presentation on their analysis of the profiles of arriving aircraft. This found that many easterly arrivals descended to approximately 5,000 ft and then flew level for up to 20 miles before descending again. A resulting action was to see if a 'radar specialist' from NATS could attend an NTSC meeting.</p> <p>The committee welcomed David Raza of NATS to the meeting. David first gave a brief overview of the AD6 airspace change which was attributed to many of the complaints</p>	LLAOL

	<p>received. AD6 came into being for safety reasons and was to split the arriving aircraft into Luton and Stansted airports. The aircraft now approach from different directions and controllers are looking to minimise track mileage which reduces fuel usage. The result was changes to the routes taken and the heights flown by arriving aircraft into Luton to the northeast of the airport.</p> <p>The practice of bringing aircraft down to 5,000 ft some distance from the airport had however been in place for many years and predated the AD6 change. It resulted from conflicts with other airports' routings and some departing traffic from Luton thus it was currently not possible to adjust this due to airspace limitations. To do so would need changes over a wider area, something that may come out of the ongoing FASI-S exercise.</p> <p>Use of Speed Brakes - The use of air/speed brakes by aircraft on arrival had been attributed to changes in the pitch and increased loudness of the noise from aircraft, with the result described as a 'whine' or 'resonant howl'. NATS advised that they were looking to utilise a forum to reduce the need to use speed brakes. The noise was considered a potential topic for an NTSC project.</p>	
7.0	<p>Dates of forthcoming Meetings in 2024</p> <p>13th March 24 5th June 24 18th September 24 11th December 24</p>	